KSGU Volume 1

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These are the novel illustrations that were included in Volume 1

Kadokawa Comics A

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM UNICORN

機動戦士ガンダムUC（ユニコーン）

1 ユニコーンの日（上）

福井晴敏
キャラクターデザイン・挿絵 安彦良和
メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ
原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季

福井晴敏（ふくい・はるとし）

1968年、東京都墨田区生まれ。1998年に『Twelve Y.O.』で第44回江戸川乱歩賞を受賞し作家デビュー。『亡国のイージス』『終戦のローレライ』『Ｏｐ.ローズダスト』など著書、映画化作品多数。現在、月刊ガンダムエース誌上にて本作『機動戦士ガンダムＵＣ』を連載中。

COVER DESIGN
akihito sumiyoshi + fake graphics

Kadokawa Comics A

機動戦士ガンダムUC（ユニコーン）1

福井晴敏

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人類が、増えすぎた人口を宇宙に移民させるようになって一世紀。
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謎の少女オードリー・バーンとの出会いから『ラプラスの箱』を巡る
事件に巻き込まれてゆく。
宇宙世紀（UC）の開闢とともに生まれ、開放されれば連邦政府が終焉すると言われる
『箱』の正体とは。
新たなるガンダムの鼓動が、世界に革新の予感を告げる――。
文壇の気鋭・福井晴敏が放つ、
21世紀の宇宙世紀神話、堂々開幕！

機動戦士
ガンダムUC ユニコーン
MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM UNICORN

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機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン 1

①ユニコーンの日(上)

福井晴敏
キャラクターデザイン・挿絵 安彦良和
メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ
原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季

君は、生き延びることができるか？

1979
2007

生き延びることはできた。君は今、何を為すのか？

日本が誇るSF大河ロマンに

福井晴敏

（『亡国のイージス』『終戦のローレライ』）

が新たな歴史を刻む!!

「ガンダム？　モビルスーツ？
いえいえ、本書は未来の若者たちのための『戦争と平和』ですよ」

——宮部みゆき

機動戦士ガンダムUC ① ISBN978-4-04-713969-5

西暦最後の夜—— 人類の原罪は宇宙世紀に持ち越された。

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文壇の気鋭・福井晴敏が放つ、21世紀の宇宙世紀神話、堂々開幕!

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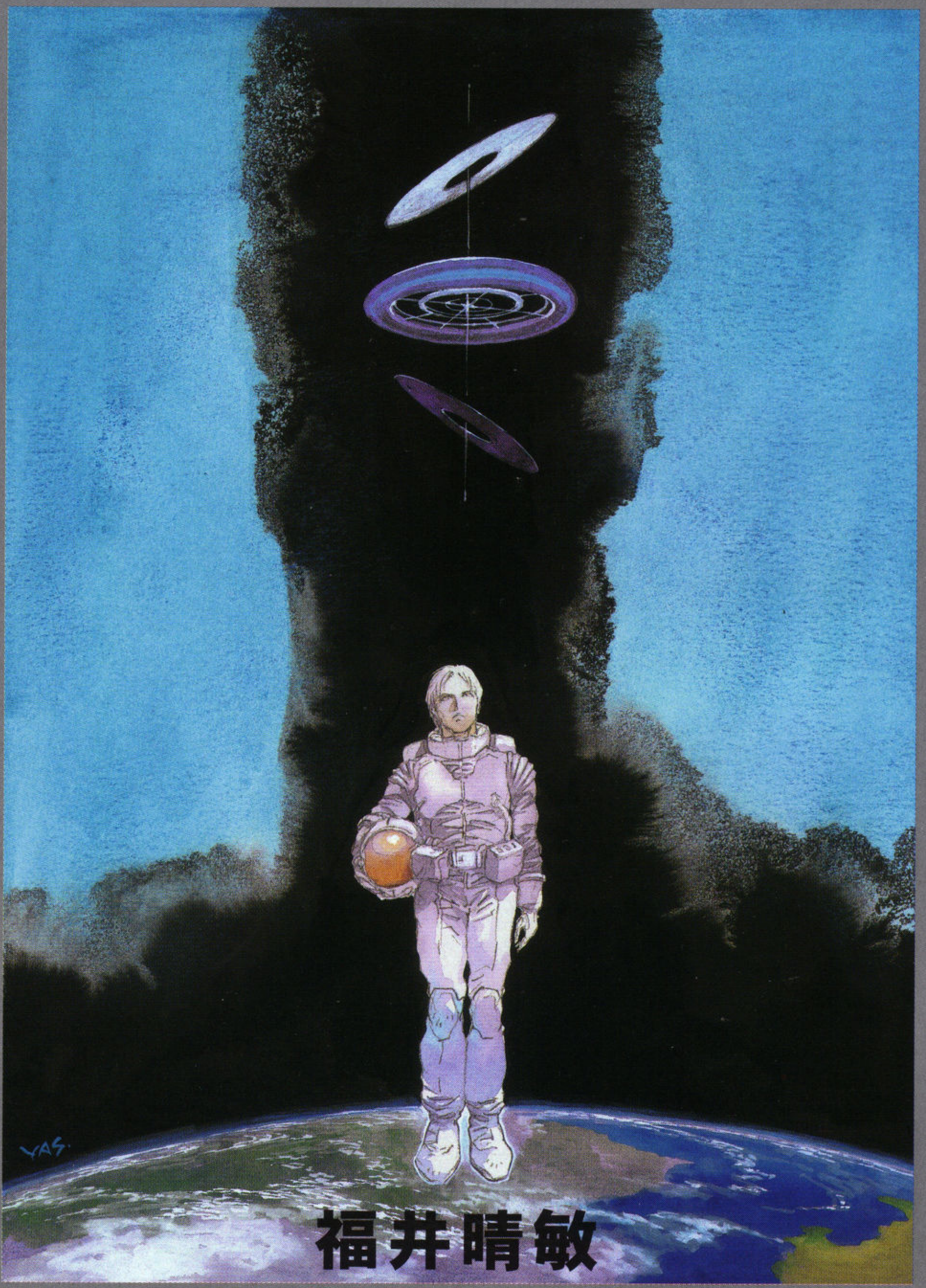
機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン

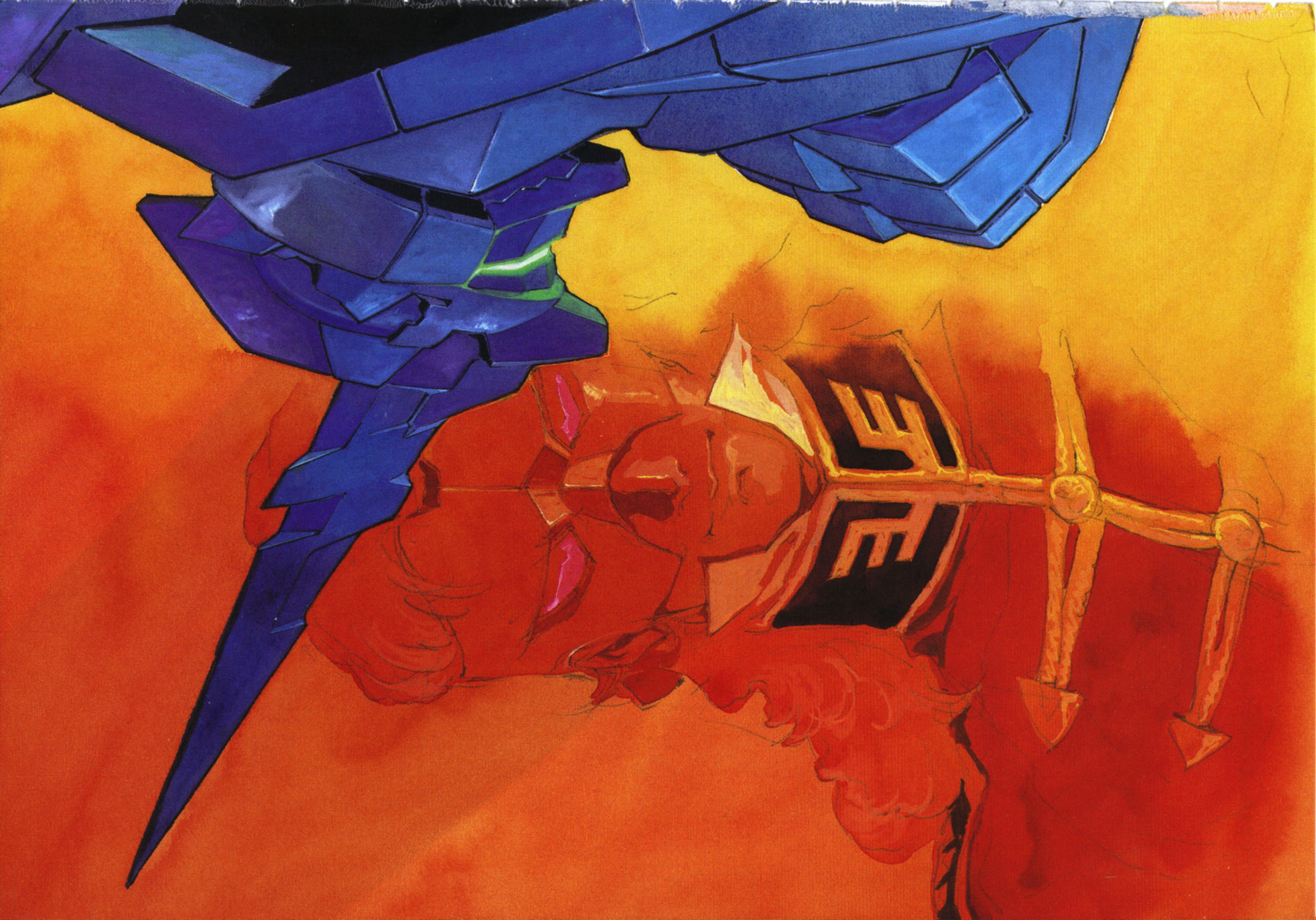
1 ユニコーンの日(上)



福井晴敏

キャラクターデザイン・挿絵 安彦良和　メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ　原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季

A century since humanity began moving its burgeoning population into space...



Prologue

0001

(20:00 GMT has passed. How is everyone spending this memorable New Year's Eve? For tonight marks the end of an old age, and the beginning of a new. The era named after the most famous person in history, the Age of Christ, will end in four hours.

Ever since humans stumbled out of the dark ages and stood on their own two feet, they have learned how to cross vast oceans and fly in in the limitless sky, and have obtained the technology to explore the final frontier: outer space. Now, humans will enter an age where we leave mother Earth, as the door to the new world is opened in front of us all!

Just as our ancestors ventured to new continents in search of opportunity and freedom, and lit the fire of civilization across the Earth, we too bear the responsibility of kindling the flame of civilization in our new continent: space. From now on, those flying into space are not just astronauts and technicians. They are trailblazers who will remain in space and light the fire of civilization in space. They are Spacenoids, chosen residents of outer space.

This new age needs a new calendar. Four hours from now, at 00 :00 GMT, the Earth Federation government will begin the ceremony of an age change. The stage for the momentous ceremony that will be forever marked in history is the Prime Minister's residence, 'Laplace.' A place that will act as the bridge

to outer space - set on an orbiting plane around the Earth, no other location could be more appropriate for the declaration of the space age.

Under the eager and watchful eyes of the media, the United Nations representatives have gathered at 'Laplace.' Everyone in the world is waiting for midnight to arrive, on New Year's Eve, the eve of a new age. Everyone has different feelings, from those anxious and full of expectations, to those still clinging to the old age that has lasted more than two thousand years. Regardless, everyone is a witness to this historic moment. In the long and tumultuous history of humanity, only we, who are alive right now, will be privileged with witnessing the beginning of a new age. So why don't we enjoy this moment, and be thankful as we say goodbye to the old age? Let us smile and accept the arrival of the new age!

Goodbye, Anno Domini.

Hello, Universal Century--!)

The Earth was right below them. The reddish-brown land contrasted with the sea that looked like blue sky covered with clouds.

Looking down from 200 kilometers above, it was more like a landscape than a planet. It didn't look as though there were an atmosphere below, but more like the view from a plane in the high skies looking down on the earth. As one continued to look, one might even gain the false impression that one could land.

"Even so, the sight of the ever-changing landscape causes me to understand that I'm moving through the upper atmosphere at an unimaginable speed — one orbit every 90 minutes. When I look forward, I can see the profile of the planet covering the atmosphere , forming a gradual gradient. Looking around, I see that there's only the strong and overpowering light of Earth taking away the shine of the stars around, and everything around is a vacuum. It's not enough to call it pitch-darkness, but rather, an endless darkness that sucks away all the light."

"It seems that I'm in outer space." Suddenly realizing this, Syam felt a chill on his back. Even though he was already tired of looking through the little window in the worker ship, it was completely different to be wearing only a spacesuit, working outside the ship and looking through the helmet visor. As there wasn't anything to block his sight, he could comprehend all the more that his body was floating outside the earth.

Being separated from Earth's gravity, and the sensation of floating continuously outside the earth… it was extremely terrifying. He could feel his blood, bones, cells becoming hot because of this abnormal change that had never occurred before. The sweat that formed became icy-cold chills, and the throat that was exposed in zero gravity let out a terrified sound.

Syam looked at the emptiness in front of him. Amidst the darkness that erased all the stars, there was one lump of star letting out a sharp glow. It was the sun, letting out white light as if it were about to explode — no, its core was actually exploding continuously, and the radiation heat in space was reaching 120

degrees Celsius and scorching the surface of his spacesuit. It was completely different from looking at the sun from beneath the atmosphere. Up here, the sun would only be an energy source that gave off harsh white light, an object that sends fear into humans. Even with the visor and light filter reducing the luminosity, that sharp and powerful light didn't look as if it were reduced.

"I'll go crazy if I stay in such a place. This isn't a place humans should come to," Syam thought. In the distant past, those eager astronauts, who now in hindsight could be said to have been reckless, flew out of the atmosphere and were each moved by the blue color of the Earth, a precious experience that had the power to override their values. However, they were the elites, specially chosen, and given the highest level of education. They were the most privileged in human society; different from those who had problems reading and writing. Even if someone like him entered outer space, there wouldn't be any benefits for him. Basically, for a 17 year old who didn't know the names of the continents or their locations, or where his hometown was, the Earth below his feet was merely a large slab that was ridiculously big.

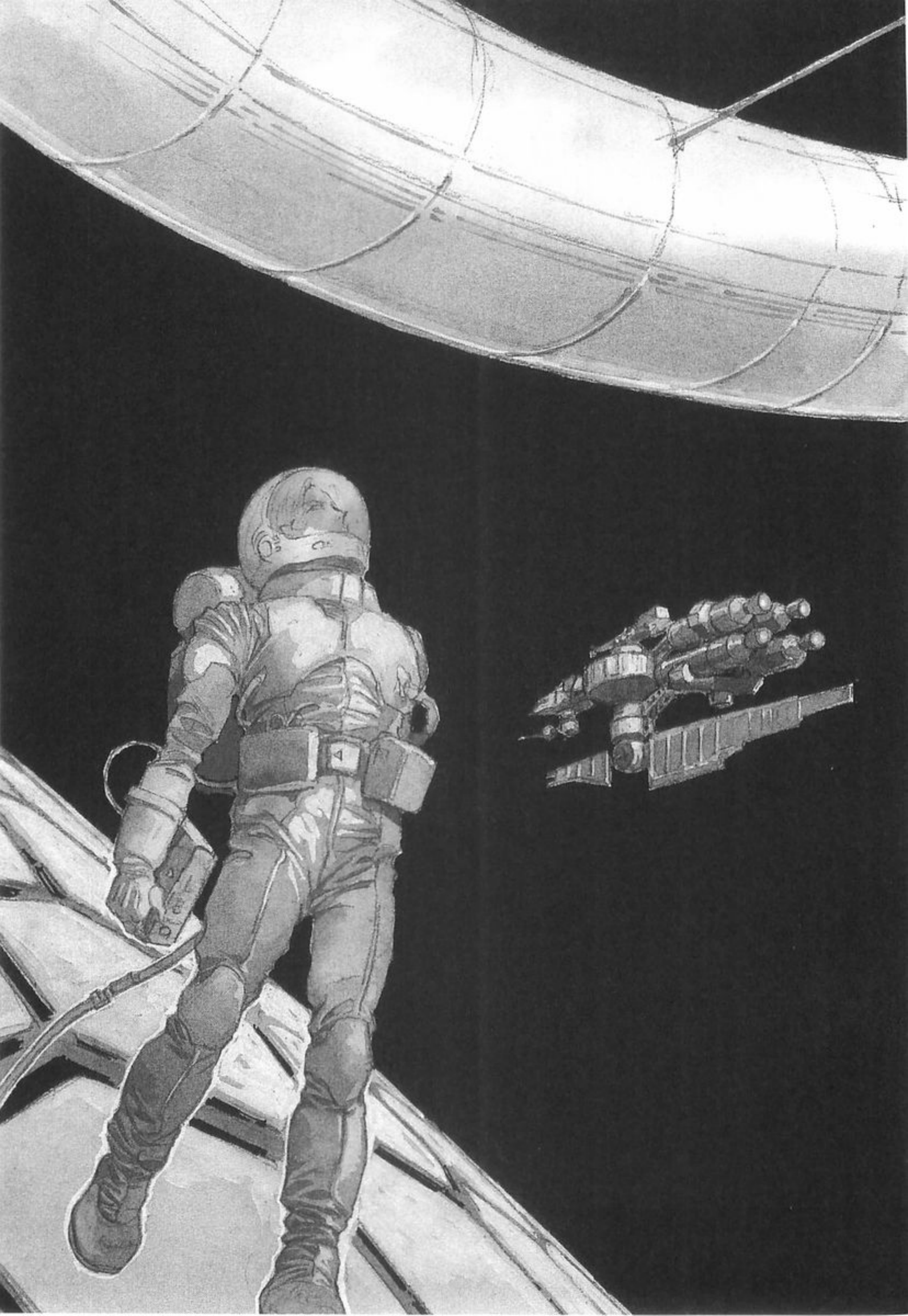
Frontiers? What kind of joke was that? This is a garbage field. A place to dump humans who are multiplying rapidly; a rubbish dump without borders.

(What kind of world will this outer space be, this place where humans will live? As the Universal Century is about to begin, let's review this for everyone once again. Today, our special guest is the top scholar in astronomy, Alexis Gretsky…)

The voice of the audio broadcaster continued to echo emptily as it mixed with his breathing, moving through the thick spacesuit with no way out. Syam touched the materials of the structure with the soles of his feet.

As he checked the safety tension of the chain, he moved the soles of his feet to flip the material onto its other side. Though he spun 180 degrees around and upside down, it meant nothing in space, where there was no concept of up and down. Syam used his hand in its thick glove to grab the material of the lattice-shaped structure, and looked at its front side. There was a mirror right in front of him, about 3m wide in a rectangular concave shape, forming a dazzling reflective surface.

Thousands of these concave mirrors formed a flat circular disk, 500m in diameter, that had been in low Earth orbit for quite a few years. In the center there was a round hole about 100m wide, and beyond the hole was an empty darkness, making the disk look like one of those optical recording discs used in the past. Syam used the magnetism in his soles to let his feet land on the edge of the disk as he looked up. The donut-shaped structure that appeared in his eyes was about the same size as this mirror field, and through the center of the hole, he could see a round-shaped body, the same shape as this mirror, with the Earth floating in the background.



The two large disks that used the concave surface to reflect the sunlight and were shining brightly had a donut ring in the middle, 300m away from them. That was the Low Earth Orbital Station ' Laplace'. The two layers, one on top and one below, reflected the sunlight, providing light and energy to what is accurately called a Stanford ring. The residential area continued to rotate once every 75 seconds, creating gravity inside from the centrifugal force. Though this would only create gravity that was 1/6 of Earth's, about the equivalent to that of the moon, it would be much better than zero gravity. It's said that for a 500m in diameter ring, one rotation in less than 30 seconds would be required to create the same amount of gravity as the Earth had, and it would cause the people inside to feel nauseous.

"Those high-ranking government officials were either too curious or idiots to use such a place as the Prime Minister's Residence, and I'm even more of an idiot to sneak around beside the station and climb around getting sick." Syam tightened his face and grimaced. At this moment, his partner's voice came from the wireless communicator (Oi, 'Shepherd', don't move away from your position too much!)

"My job's done."

"Then get back onto the ship. Your lifesigns are messed up!"

His partner, a man who was viewed as the captain because of his seniority in age and whose authority was just second to the ' worker head', said. There wouldn't be any sense of distance caused by air in vacuum, so he could see the shape of the object.

The double layered ring structure that was divided into the outside and inside structure, the central spoke elevator that extend out from the central rotary axis, the joints of the structure and the texture; everything was so detailed that it was like a miniature model right in front of him.

Syam watched the outside ring that had glass stuck all over its interior to absorb light. As of the Greenwich Meridian Time, it should be night time, thus the light that's reflected off the mirror wasn't shone into the residential area. However, the interior lights came out from the glass panels, letting any observers know that someone was resting inside.

Over there, the final preparations for the changing of calendars ceremony 4 hours later were under way. From 23:45 on, the Prime Minister would give his speech, all the national representatives of the countries in the United Nations who were attending would be received, and adjustments for midnight for the ceremony would be done…facing what would be the biggest activity in human history, perhaps the officials should be extremely busy. Syam and the rest were called here to prepare this. The content of the work was to make a small correction to the mirror control program that was to be used for the ceremony.

However, this wasn't an easy procedure that could be done from the controls at the control room. It was necessary to link directly to the hundreds of independent control panels inside the mirrors and install the correction angle program. This could be said to manual labor. It's said that nobody considered just using a single large mirror instead of an array of mirrors, and merely change the angle of the mirror at will. "I don't know about the

angle of the mirror, and I don't have to know. We're just the limbs, and other people are in charge of being the brain." Syam thought. The person who gave Syam and the others membership cards from the Motor company and sent them to 'Laplace'; the person who said that a reward would be provided to them once the job was done; the person who was pretending that nothing happened as he waited for 'that' moment, and that it was unlikely for them to meet him.

"Lifesigns are messed up? What nonsense." Syam cursed in his heart. In this moment, nobody could remain calm. That's because his gang's actions would bring about a decisive change to hundreds of people's fates as they watched the ring…

(The concept of space migration existed in the 20th Century. It was raised by the physicist G.K O'Neill. His point was revised was because he wanted to let outer space be a place suitable for humans to live in. Earlier, the thoughts of migration to outer space was to either modify Venus or Mars into environments similar to Earth's, ideas that could only happen in a Sci-Fi world. Because of this, O'Neill's idea of using 'islands' in the migration of humans, including building on the moon or in the asteroid belt, had a chance of happening using the technology of that time. The basis of the space migration plan of today can be said to be completed by O'Neill.)

Syam didn't know which scholar was talking again as he pulled on his safety cable and let his body fly to the back of the mirror area.

(The idea itself was rather simple. Let a ball or round construct rotate regularly inside, causing the internal structure to create 1 G, the same amount of gravity as on Earth. If you hold a bucket full of water and swing it about hard, the water inside wouldn't fall out due to centrifugal force, correct? It's the same principal. The first ball-shaped object is commonly called 'Island 1', and it could just barely manage to create 1 G, but the latest, 'Island 3', is a giant: 32 kilometers long and 6.4 kilometers in diameter. This large cylinder has forests, rivers, streets, and habitats similar to Earth inside the walls; and the space residents are now living there.)

Like many mirrors, the back of the mirrors were just simple boards. The numerous supporting structures were intertwined with each other in a lattice structure. As Syam returned to the back , several of his colleagues were using handheld terminals and inputting the new program into the control panel.

In the darkness that was completely different from the mirror surface, flashing red warning lights were the only illumination, dimly lighting the area and showing the spacesuits of about 5 of Syam's colleagues. The cables of their spacesuits were all linked to a worker ship that was floating silently above them. The ship was jar-shaped, long, and narrow: 20m long and 30m in diameter, with the thrusters and a solar battery on the rear. Behind it, numerous green and white spaceship lights were roaming.

Those lights belonged to the Federation Spaceship, the Salamis-class security vessel. 70m in length with an uneven surface . The command area was protruding from the frame in front, and there were four jet thrusters on the back. The ship itself had a solar

panel that was as large as the ship itself. For a security ship, it really reminded one of a fishbone, and looked really unreliable. But as Syam had been told beforehand, the ship had high-energy laser cannons, and an unmatched combat ability

The Salamis class had lots of modes. There were all sorts of things, from the gatling guns that were built into the center of the ship, to the mounted railgun that was as long as the ship itself. However, the common point between all of them were their controlled satellite radar cannons. The small unmanned cannons had batteries, solar panels and laser-firing guns, and each vessel had 24 of these cannons. When necessary, the cannons could be scattered around the ship to create an iron wall-like defensive zone . Right now, it was under special security mode, and any suspicious craft that approached 'Laplace' even if it was cosmic dust in orbit would be destroyed the moment the radar detected it.

According to the information from before, there were 36 Salamis-class vessels, which, in other words, meant that there were 864 satellite lasers. However, it is expected that there would be such a large number, given that the space station need to defended in all 3 dimensions. 'Laplace', which had the Prime Minister and the representatives of the United Nations on it, would be the one place that required the most security in the Earth's atmosphere. This time, the security was due to a threat letter the space Federation army recieved. In fact, Syam felt that no matter how devious the terrorists were, they couldn't possibly attack from outside.

That's right, if it was outside—

(Of course, the migrants in outer space would have night. The residential area of 'Island 3' has a mirror to absorb sunlight that is as long as the colony itself. As this diagram shows, the inside of the cylinder is divided into six areas. Three areas are lighting windows, and the light that enters here will shine on the other three areas. The windows are made from extremely thick glass that can block any harmful ultraviolet rays or galactic radiation. Right now, there are three residential satellites of 'Island 3' built, and there are technicians and settlers bringing their families to live here. But right now, there still aren't any reports of a residential satellite causing an epidemic of settlment. Once we adjust the light, we can recreate the 4 seasons. And we can even make artificial clouds for rainy days. In terms of complete management, this would be even more suited to live in than Earth.)

(Go live there yourself then!)

As the scholar said that, a colleague's voice came through the wireless communicator. Everyone was using the cable to keep in touch as they listened to the special program before the change of the calendar. Another colleague said, (He'll go! He'll keep his own colony on Earth and use it as a villa.)

(Outer space is truly large. However, we know that not every place is suited to build a migrant colony. The space migrant colony requires a construction in a gravity "safe zone" called a Lagrange Point. These are points that where the pull of gravity from the Earth and the moon is equal. There are 5 around the moon's orbit. We call these points L1 through L5. The 'Island 3' space colony that I just mentioned is located at the most stable of these points, L5, forming a settlement called Side 1. Right now, there are 10

million people living there, but once migration starts next year, the human population should vastly increase. The residential colonies should be constructed, and it's expected that there would be 70 or 80 space colonies forming a side that operates as its own government.)

(Assuming that a space colony can take 10 million people, once one side's population reaches 700 or 800 million, how many sides would the space migration plan need to build?)

(Right now, the plan is to continue to Side 6, but just that would require upwards of 50 years to complete. The expected capacity of all the colonies is around 5 billion people. With the projected population increase over the next 50 years, the estimate is that half of the population will become space migrants.)

Someone whistled and said (Hey, there's one for every two!), and then someone else said (Then you're the one being eliminated!)

(Basically, no one will dare reduce the human population, so once the Earth is full they'll just dump the excess people into outer space. Those people like us who got the 'eliminated life' stick."

Then, they were interrupted by the worker head (Stop yapping!), and there was only the voices of the audio broadcaster and the scholar. As he stared at the Salamis class vessel that looked really overwhelming, Syam muttered, "Being eliminated…"

Under the calls of 'Save the Earth, Save the Rest', the 50-year plan for humanity to migrate to outer space started. Most of these

separatists, anti-government organizations or underground people believed that it was a grand scheme to abandon people in space. But no matter whether it was real or not, it was a fact that people like Syam were 'eliminated' and dumped into outer space first. In fact, though there were lots of enterprises that wanted to head into outer space, they were all only attracted by the premium offers, and most of the first residents in outer space were all wanderers—low income people, as the association mentioned.

However, these weren't the problems. Most of the administration of the 'organization' were brazenly calling for people to separate from the Federation government, hailing national spirit and social rights. But these were just useless talk to Syam and the rest. If the Federation government could assure that they could work like this, they would definitely choose to support it, even if they had to head to the space colony 'Island 3' that looked like a huge high-pressure metal bottle. The problem was that they never had a choice in the beginning. The Federation's administration caused countries to be divided as they lost their jobs and hopes. The only option they could choose was to join the ' organization', which was the biggest problem.

Syam had been born in a poor small country in the Middle East. In his memories, the Earth Federation government was already established, and the surface of the moon was already known as a mining extraction site called Von Braun. But none of that had anything to do with Syam's family, as they were always in the highlands, being shepherds. It didn't matter to them whether the projection device on the moon surface mining site was finished or that the resource investigation group went to a planet far away to bring some test results back. It was just another world's news to

Syam and the rest. The most he would hear was the adults complaining that the taxes were heavy and that the government would only remember them when it was time to collect.

And to these voices of discontent, the Federation government merely said that ‘the Earth is already so tired’. Similar to what people in the past called the ‘green revolution’, the government declared that the increase in Earth's population caused damage to the environment, and the pollution from these people was another problem. Finally, if something like a limited nuclear war happened , it would be obvious that it was just a matter of time before Earth reached its limit, and the Earth Federation created lots of enterprises to save the world from this extreme situation. Then, the Federation government started to push for space migration, and declared that this was the one and only plan. Meanwhile, the Federation government used overwhelming military power to suppress any scattered seeds of discord and opposition on the tired Earth.

Though in the past, the Federation had divided great countries in order to to ensure that there wasn’t much difference in the military and economic affairs of each, the people in charge were still the politicians of the old powerhouses. This point made many countries try to leave the Federation, and Syam’s own country was one of them. The country allied with the other Middle Eastern countries as crude oil was depleted, and what they got was divided in half. The land was divided in half under the punishment for rebellion, and the law was rewritten. The old customs of their ancestors were broken, Everyone was required to learn English, and the school curriculum changed.

Amidst this, Syam's father joined the guerilla forces and was soon arrested and sent to prison. Syam really couldn't imagine how that silent man whose only good point was his righteousness would be so passionate. But his father died in prison before he could even answer his doubts. Syam was left with his mother and his younger sister, and had to give up on his education to continue his family tradition of shepherding. That's how he got the nickname 'Shepherd'.

However, that job didn't last long either. As the migration to the space colonies entered its final stages, the Federation required a large number of launch sites, and the highlands where Syam and his people were staying at became one. Once the negotiations with the landowners and the resettlement of the people was complete, Syam's family was given a small compensation and chased away. Syam could only let his mother and little sister stay in the apartment in the city where the air quality was bad and go to work at the launch site. That was Syam's new life. And 3 years later, once the 6th launch site was completed, the person in charge of manpower told him that he didn't have any work left, and that they found that his father was a guerilla and they were ordered to fire him.

This reasoning was too far-fetched. After that, Syam heard that the Federation government's industrial strategy was to let lots of foreigners enter and send off those who had relations to guerillas. This could be said to be eliminating the guerillas and warning the rest of the people, a rather effective strategy. Syam was too lazy to even waste energy getting angry, and he needed money. His mother wasn't used to living in the city, and was often sick; and money was needed to see a doctor. His sister was reaching puberty

, and he needed money to buy unpatched clothing for her; he had to work for bread tomorrow, for soup today.

He started going to an employment agency, going in and out of odd jobs. And this sort of place had brokers from violent organizations and suspicious underground recruiters, and Syam was quickly found by them. He didn't have any meaningless thought of avenging his father at all, and wasn't interested in their intents to inspire feelings in him. What interested him was the monetary reward they provided. Syam merely considered for 3 days before agreeing signing up with a recruiter who was pretending to be a religious person. After a simple oath, he undertook the required training in an old mosque, and got in with everyone before entering outer space with his colleagues whose names he didn't even know.

"That's right, this is a job." Syam muttered. As it's a job, no matter whether it's the disgusting feeling of icy cold underwear or the claustrophobic nature of the aluminum and fiberglass spacesuit, he could still take it. This wasn't because of some ideology or a revolution. He was different from the religious fanatics who swore to carry out suicide attacks. Surviving, finishing the job and getting his payment was everything. He had no choice if he wanted to let his mother and little sister live an ordinary life.

If not for that, who would come to this place? If he had a decent job, if he had money, if he didn't draw the 'eliminated in life' tag…

(But, everyone, remember that even with this, there are 5 billion humans left on Earth. This is the same population as during the

20th century, when people started to take note of the population explosion. This number is still too great to let the Earth recover naturally. The ideal situation is to reduce the population to 2 billion.

Even if a Lagrange Point can have two Sides built in it, the upper limit of Sides will still be ten, and it's possible to let tens of billions of people live in outer space. However, assuming that the completion of construction requires hundreds of years; nobody knows what the population would be then. It would be overly optimistic to assume that the Earth's environment had recovered by then. Right now, we can only hope that the wisdom of humanity 100 years later will settle this.

I hope that everyone who opposes the space migration plan can understand this. We, humanity, established this overall authority in the Earth Federation government and had to fulfill this seemingly impossible plan. Let us stop this self-destruction and look 100 years into the future. A common cry is that the space migration plan is the Federation's plan to abandon…)

The scholar's voice was suddenly interrupted, and an unnatural music filled the silence. (Eh—even though the topic isn't over, right now, there's footage of the change in calendar happening in areas all over the world. First, the image from New York City, still recovering from war…) As he listened to the voice of the broadcaster, Syam tugged at the cable and moved forward.

Was it because the topic of abandoning people wasn't supposed to be mentioned? Even though the Federation government claimed to be democratic, the censorship of information in the media by the

government caused the actual report to be held for a long time. (Idiot). A colleague muttered as the voices of the interviews with the residents of New York overlapped.

(Why did he cut it off? Wasn't he just hailing the Federation?)

(That Queen's Scholar really spoke too much truth!)

(Worrying about 100 years later? Worry about your tomorrow!)

Laughter of mockery rang throughout the wireless communicator, but it didn't remain for long. Syam remained silent and headed towards the airlock on the worker ship.

There's no need to worry about weight in space, but the mass wouldn't disappear. The moment he touched the airlock, Syam used both hands to support his mass and the spacesuit that had life support inside it. Just as he was about to pull the handle, the blue light of the Earth shone into his eyes through the round plates of the mirror.

In the atmosphere that was divided into day and night, there is a string of light that is hard to tell whether it was red or green. It was an aurora. It seemed that 'Laplace' moved above the South Pole. As he looked at this mystically beautiful line, Syam felt a little moved, but he immediately looked away and pulled the handle of the airlock.

There was no need to embrace and feel everything. He should be going back after finishing his work. On hearing the slightly hasty breathing, Syam started to think of his mother and sister and wonder how they were.

(Greetings, citizens of Earth and Space. I'm the Prime Minister of the Earth Federation, Ricardo Marcenas.)

At 23:45 Greenwich Mean Time, the Prime Minister's speech began as planned. Syam finished getting away, and was in the worker ship cabin leaving the orbit of 'Laplace', watching the live telecast on a small screen.

(The end of A.D. is nigh, and we shall enter an unknown territory called Universal Century. During this momentous time, I am glad to have the honor, as the first Prime Minister of the Earth Federation government, to talk to 'all of humanity'. So allow me to express my gratitude here.

When I was young, the Prime Minister or the President would only talk to the citizens of their own countries. A state is a governing system of the land and the people on it, and ultimately exists to ensure that their own countries were safe. And right now, for us, who have achieved the longstanding desire to unify the world, we have defined the errors in Nationalism. Just as humans can't exist on their own, we know that countries can't operate alone. Especially when it comes to an important issue like the Earth in crisis, where no previous nation was able to come up with an effective counter. The population issues that were addressed at

the end of the 20th century, like drying up of resources, environmental destruction through pollutions…to address these irreversible problems, we need all of the knowledge that all of us have.)

In the small cabin, there were 14 people watching the screen on the wall. Other than the two pilots in the cockpit, everyone that took part in the work was here. Syam thought that nobody present looked like they were suited to be the Prime Minister of outer space.

The wrinkles on the 'worker head's face hid his many years of hard work and manual labor. This man who was viewed as the leader plucked his nostril hairs and he blew it away as they were stuck to his face due in the zero gravity. If this were seen by the astronauts who paved the way for space exploration, they would be already be crying at the fact that even people like him could enter Outer Space in the Universal Century.

(Not a 'Me' that belongs to any country or tribe, but a 'me' that belongs to humanity. If we don't have this objective view, we wouldn't be able to have today. The past 50 years, since we began this grand scheme, have not been smooth sailing for the Earth Federation government or the human migration to space plan. In fact, we had to go through much in order to break apart countries, races, religions…all these obstacles to a united humanity.

But right now, we have this new living habitat, the space colonies. The migration shall begin officially, and many people

living in space colonies will be the norm in future generations. This glorious result of humanity uniting together, is to save the Earth from us crushing it.)

In the residential area of 'Laplace', at a circular podium, Prime Minister Marcenas was using his normal, steady expression that was usually shown on television as he faced the camera. The people sitting in front of the podium were the representatives of the Federation countries. The screen showed them looking serious. Syam looked at the screen and wondered about the outcome his gang's work would cause.

The concave lens that formed 'Laplace' would follow a non-designated action according to the program Syam and the others installed. What should have happened at midnight was reflecting sunlight onto the Earth's surface, showing the words ' Goodbye AD, Hello, UC' in the atmosphere.

(If Anno Domini was really the infancy of humanity, then the Universal Century shall be the next state. We're not lowering the population through birth control, but chose to open more space for the population to move. A baby that climbs out of the cradle must continue to grow. In the process of fulfilling the plan to migrate to space, we're proving to the entire world that we can co-exist for one goal. Then, what's next?

Universal Century. In ordinary terms it means 'A Century for everyone'. The age of outer space should be written as 'Universe Century', but we deliberately used the word 'Universal', which means 'for all', as the name for the new century.)

In fact, the process activated before midnight. Under the thousands of concave mirrors, the mirrors that had the program installed started to change directions and focus the light on a certain residential area of 'Laplace'.

(I was born in the old United States of America, spent my infant years in Germany, my youth in France, and my student life in Asia . I married my wife, who's of Arabic and European descent, and my parents were about the same. Looking back at my ancestors, I find that I have more than 30 bloodlines within me. All the skin colors, all the bloodlines of all the races reside in me. It's because of this 'normalcy' that I was able to attain the unique honor of being the first Prime Minister of the Earth Federation government. I believe that there are many who share such a background. As the technological advancement began officially in the 21st century, and as the uniformity of economies caused the world to unite, the various of bloodlines and skin colors began to mix. The Federation government established a world without country borders, designated a standard language for the entire world. These things, along with the mixing of bloodlines are no longer anything special.

As humans need to reside in outer space, it's important for all of humanity to unite together. We can't let this miracle become a special occasion. We must normalize that fact that humanity has united, not rejecting each other, not hating each other, and become one race as we head to a wider universe. The term Universal Century includes our hopes.)

As the station's orbit and the equator were at right angles, ' Laplace' wouldn't orbit behind the Earth, but instead orbit such that the sun always shines on it. A part of the concave mirror that

had been adjusted continued to reflect the sunlight, gathering the light and focusing it on a certain point.

(I don't belong to any religion, but I'm not an atheist. I believe that a healthy representation of the human spirit would be to ascend to a higher plane, to give laws to ourselves, as we set higher bars for ourselves. During the Anno Domini Era, these Holy Scriptures were spread from man to man. Even without mentioning the Ten Commandments of Moses, every religion teaches doctrines on how people should live and face the Earth. These weren't viewed as human words, but rather as a contract with God.

And now, we're about to say goodbye to the century of Gods and accept the time of a new contract. This time, it's not to surpass God, but to communicate with the God inside us, as we move up to a higher plane. The contract of the Universal Century should be born of all of humanity's consciousness.)

As it was a vacuum, the temperature of the concentrated heat focused by the countless concave mirrors would be an absolute temperature of 5500 degrees, and the numerous light rays that would become heat rays would burn a block of the 'Laplace' residential area—the water supply circuit in the environmental controls. Of course, these were invisible light rays. Unless they noticed the focal point of the intense irradiation, even the Salamis-class ships surrounding the area wouldn't discover it.

(I suppose quite a few people know about the origin of the name of the Prime Minister's Residence 'Laplace'. This was the name of a physicist in 18th century France. Laplace felt that no

matter how big or small, if we completely analyze anything, such as the movement of a particle, we can thoroughly predict its future . This kind of thought was later disproven by Quantum Mechanics. Right now, though, we've proven that the future can't be predicted . And we use this name in the opposite of its meaning and called this Prime Minister's Residence 'Laplace', to mean 'many possibilities in the future'.

Everyone knows that there was quite the controversy over the Prime Minister's residence being a space station orbiting around the Earth. From a transportation and security viewpoint, this wasn 't really a good choice. However, we are about to advance into the Universal Century, and outer space shall become mankind's new home. As a human being, I feel that there are some differences between Earth and Outer Space that I have to personally experience. Thus I used the authority of the Prime Minister to make this decision. And there is no better stage to change the calendar on the last day of Anno Domini and to start the Universal Century than this space station.)

The half of 'Laplace' which was being lit by the sun had a temperature of 120 degrees Celsius. The dark side was a chilling cold of negative 120 degrees Celsius. Thus, the water supply circuit that moves through the residential area controlled the environment and the temperature. And right now, it was like putting a magnifying glass in the middle as the concentrated heat rays were moving through the mirrored areas on the top and the bottom as they continued to burn the water supply circuits.

(Today, there are more than 100 representatives from different countries in the Earth Federation. After some discussion, we shall

sign the charter of the Universal Century. This Charter shall be known as the Laplace Charter, and it shall act as a contract between Humanity and the World.

This is based on the agreement from everyone in the Earth Federation government, and no mention of God is in it. We shall not mention Humanity's original sin. After this, we are to face our final judgment, and then we shall break the deadlock in our hearts. Our destiny will be in our hands.)

The focused rays burned the metal on the surface, causing the water in the supply circuit to boil and become steam. Before the sensors even realized something was wrong, the pipes had already burst from the internal pressure. The pressure inside the residential area immediately shot up, and as oxygen broke free from steam due to the high temperature—

(Right now, we have a vast and endless universe in front of us, one that is filled with all sorts of hidden possibilities, an ever-changing future. No matter how you came to be standing on this entrance, you have no need to bring your past into the new world. We are now starting at the beginning, and there is no need to be troubled about other people writing the scripts in your life. Just use the God in you to look clearly at the future that is about to begin.

Right now, it is 23:59 Greenwich Mean Time. I ask that everyone who is watching this telecast, if possible, please pray silently with me for one moment. Think about Anno Domini, which will soon pass, think about the history of Humanity that everyone made, and offer your blessings.

I hope that the journey of all humanity into outer space shall be stable. I hope that the Universal Century is the age where results succeed. And I believe that, lying dormant in our hearts, the God called possibilities—)

5, 4, 3, 2, 1…00:00. The image of the screen was switched to a view of 'Laplace'.

Universal Century 0001, January 1st.

Suddenly, static brushed past the screen as a white light was released. The next moment, the structure of 'Laplace' silently collapsed.

The delicate artistry of the ring collapsed terribly as it exploded from inside, and a large amount of building materials, walls and glass fragments were scattered all over the place. The concave mirrors of the two disks that were spinning on either side of the donut ring broke, one by one, losing their silver shine. The two mirror surfaces that linked the living quarters to the rotary axis distorted as the crumpled donut and the two dirty broken mirrors became worse than trash as they floated around in vacuum. The scattered debris hit the surrounding patrol ships, and those Salamis-class ships that were unluckily enough to be hit directly showed a light ring of explosion. As the large space station laid in the background, these were all little light spots decorating the area as they covered the collapsed 'Laplace' like flowers—

It was a majestic, short, and disappointing scene. The spaceships and space stations, which all had large amounts of air pressure inside, were like metallic balloons. By increasing the air

pressure inside so much until it becomes explosive, they would easily burst. Syam had heard of such a phenomenon happening. But as he thought about the destruction of the Prime Minister's office, which had signified the might of the Federation; as he thought about the space migration plan of humanity; as he thought about how hundreds or even thousands of people were immediately thrown into vacuum, ripped the shreds, becoming frozen corpses before they even felt death; as he thought about how the first step of the Universal Century, the significant event in human history, and also the worst space terrorist attack, an attack so bloody, that it was really hard for him to be satisfied with it…

(We're bringing the news to you. Just a few minutes ago, the Prime Minister's residence 'Laplace' seemed to have a certain accident. Details are sparse, but it's said to be a major incident…)

The image was switched to a television studio, where a broadcaster who couldn't hide his tension and excitement was reporting. Everyone remained silent and watched the screen. Finally, the 'worker head' spoke, "We succeeded. Now we can have even more comfortable lives!" His words had a rare joking tone. However, there wasn't a hint of laughter in his eyes, and beside him, the captain, who would normally follow up such a remark, remained silent.

(The fates of Prime Minister Marcenas and the national representatives are still unknown in this time of crisis…) The voice of the broadcaster rang as the news was reported. For some reason, Syam started to recall the contents of the speech the Prime Minister had just made. Not needing to bring the past life into the new world. Not being troubled by other people writing their own lives.

These words that were like foreign objects that exploded and surged in his mind.

"Our destinies are in our hands," the Prime Minister had said. Isn't the 'our' he mentioned referring to us? Not because we were the 'eliminated ones,' but because the Prime Minister wanted to convey some important message to us?— As Syam thought this, he remembered that the Prime Minister had became a frozen block too. The next second, Syam forgot about it, and he began wondering whether he could return back to Earth, whether he could claim his reward, all sorts of realistic uncertainties. This was why the worker ship got ready to accelerate a second time, and why the inside of the ship got busy.

To enter the Earth via low orbit, the ship had to maintain a speed of 8 kilometers per second. If it was too slow, the ship would burn up due to gravity and air resistance. On the other hand if the speed were too high, the ship would rise out of orbit. The worker ship had accelerated once already, and it was still higher than ' Laplace'. However, the ship needed to accelerate to 10 kilometers per second to completely break free from orbit.

The escape plan the 'organization' prepared was simple. Once it broke free from low orbit, the ship would move into a geosynchronous satellite orbit, 35,000 kilometers above the Earth, dock with the satellite in that orbit. Once the ship docked, everyone would leave the worker ship, sneak into the facility, blend in with the workers there, and take a shuttle back to Earth.

The scattered debris of 'Laplace' were gradually accelerating and starting to orbit higher than their original position. If this kept

up, there was a risk that the debris would hit the worker ship. The Federation patrol ships weren't completely destroyed, and they should be hurriedly securing a space territory. After some pushing , as they weren't used to zero gravity, Syam and the others finally managed to stabilize themselves in the crude chairs in the cabin. Three days after they had gotten to outer space, the men's faces became 'moon faces' (as the fluids change in nature under zero gravity, causing their faces to swell). They lined up against the walls, and soon after, the rocket fuel ignition caused the ship to jerk, and everyone was pressed into the chairs by pressure.

The high-power laser that took the place of the spark plug in the laser rocket fuel engine resulted in three times the thrust of previous rockets. Though it was in a 'safety driving' mode of an acceleration of 1 kilometer every two minutes, to a body used to zero gravity, the weight of 1G is still tough to handle. Syam closed his eyes and grabbed the edge of the chair.

The acceleration soon stopped. Five hours from now, they would enter their orbit and come into contact with the industrial satellite. "Once we're there, I'll be able to return to Earth. How're my mom and sister? Do I have enough money to see a doctor? Once I get back to the country, we should move away from that cramped rabbit cage of an apartment and move to a more appropriate place! Let's go buy some land and restart my life as a shepherd. That's good, I don't want to stay in outer space. I don't want to get involved with the 'organization'. I want to use this money to buy my life that won't be eliminated—"

At this moment, a terrifying shock shook the body of the ship.

'KLANG!' With a heavy-sounding dropping sound, the tail of the ship gave an uncomfortable jerk. One could hear that it wasn't from the engine itself. Everyone was already used to the weird noises from unidentified objects or hard things rubbing against each other in outer space, but that sharp sound that hit the ship didn't sound normal. Everyone look at the ceiling of the ship, shouting “Did we get hit by ‘Laplace’s’ debris?!” The 'Worker Head' immediately took the phone inside the cockpit. Syam stared at his unhappy face.

“They're coming, the dead of 'Laplace' are chasing us...!”

The guy viewed as the captain clutched his head and screamed with an abnormal tone, and Syam inadvertently started to shudder too. However, the 'Worker Head' quickly shouted back, “Shut up!”

“It seems that something hit near the engine. The thrust is decreasing. 'Shepherd', go outside to take a look.”

As he said that, the 'Worker Head' put down the phone, and watched Syam’s eyes. The reason why Syam was called was definitely because their eyes just met, but like usual, the 'Worker Head's’ tone wouldn't allow for any refusal. Syam wordlessly undid the buckle on his chair, and headed towards the airlock.

As there was no acceleration, the cabin had returned to zero gravity, but the man viewed as the captain continued to lower his head as if the gravity were higher than ever, and didn't even look up even when Syam entered the airlock.

It is said that before they exited the ship to work outside, astronauts had to reduce the air pressure inside their bodies. Improvements in modern spacesuits removed this hassle though. Syam put on the helmet, took the life support backpack from the wall. A minute later he was ready to open the hatch and go outside .

As the air in the airlock vanished, all the sounds vanished with it, and Syam could only hear his own breathing. After checking that the hook beside the airlock and the cable were tightly secured, Syam floated out of the worker ship and let his body move to the end of the ship.

It wasn't accelerating, but the worker ship wasn't stopped either . Right now, it would be traveling at a speed of 9 kilometers per second, which would allow the ship to break free from low orbit. While undergoing training half a year ago, Syam still wondered whether he would be abandoned outside the ship like this. However, as the humans that were being transported were moving as well, they won't stop unless the met any obstacles or resisting forces. For example, someone jumping outside a plane will fall down due to gravity acting on their body, and would slow down because of air resistance. These forces didn’t exist in outer space, so a human leaving a spaceship that was moving at 9 kilometers per second, would follow the ship at that same speed. Which meant that Syam would feel that he and the ship were sitting still.

Thus, Syam had to use a hand-held booster in order to move in the opposite direction of the worker ship. More accurately, he wasn't 'moving forward' to the end of the ship, but slowing his

body down and letting the ship 'move more'. Syam pulled the safety cable to bring his relatively velocity to the ship back to zero, and started to investigate the exhaust pipe on the back of the cylindrical ship.

He immediately found the problem. The fuel pipe attached outside the ship was broken, and chemical fuel was being spilled. He didn't know whether the pipe had been hit by small asteroids, or by the debris of 'Laplace'. Seeing the leaking fuel that froze as soon as it got outside, Syam remembered the guy they viewed as the captain saying 'they're after us', and he started to feel some goosebumps.

It was common to collide with space dust. Syam used what little knowledge he had from his training to calm his anxiety and notified the ship about the damage. the 'Worker Head' answered: (Close the control valve. We can accelerate with what we have left. Hurry up and get back.) Syam cut the frozen fuel pillar on the pipe and threw it far away. If he left it alone, there would be an ice pillar floating and probably ending up in the ship's exhaust stream . If that happened while the exhaust was firing, there would be a very large explosion.

Syam pulled the safety cable and went back to the airlock. As his back turned away from the Earth and the Sun, he witnessed an incredible sight. He looked at the stars, undulled by the atmosphere, that were like a carpet giving off silver light. He could see no moons, no artificial satellites, just a hunge array of dazzlingly bright stars. He could barely use his naked eyes to look between the stars; it was an abyss the bottom of which even the speed of light couldn't reach.

"It’s so memorable." This thought flashed through Syam's mind. Just at the moment when he was troubled by this idle thought, the wireless communicator was cut off, and with a sharp flash of light, Syam saw the airlock burst into flames.

The flames expanded for a moment, swallowing the entire worker ship. The moment before he was caught in the shockwave, Syam saw the spacesuit of the pilot flung out from the cockpit, just like many of the burning debris. The hull of the worker ship exploded from inside, and then Syam was blown away by the shockwave of the explosion. The uneven inertia caused his body to spin vertically, and through the visor, he could see the Earth and the stars quickly moving by.

The stars, the sun and the Earth drew dazzling long arcs as they moved up, and Syam was moving further and further away from the scrap metal of the worker ship. “First, I should stop spinning, find something and see if my spacesuit is alright.” His mind flashed through the response scenario he had learnt, but the shockwave had numbed his senses and he couldn’t operate well. Syam could only flail his limbs weakly. “What happened? Why did the worker ship explode? Didn’t I throw the leaking fuel pillar out? There’s nothing else wrong!”

"No, that’s not it. That’s an explosion from within. Something happened inside the ship. Something exploded…what? Other than fuel, we weren’t carrying anything dangerous! Those allies of ours who were in charge of managing stocks checked them. There can’t be any explosions unless something deliberately brought one on—
"

His gut suddenly shrank; Syam widened his eyes in fear. Betrayal, explosion, silence. Many words came in his mind as he watched the scene in front of him, and tried to come up with a conclusion. However, he was ultimately swallowed by fear and chaos, and finally, the only words he could remember were the words of that guy, the captain, that were spoken in an abnormal tone 'they're here'.

They're the dead of 'Laplace'. The thousands of dead that had been alive several minutes ago became countless corpses that caught up with the worker ship, bared their fangs and attacked, taking suitable revenge on the people who killed them. Killing the 'Worker Head' and everyone else inside the cabin, and letting Syam, who was coincidentally outside the ship, sink to a gradual death.

The severed safety cable crossed him, and the debris of the worker ship were floating away. The life support in Syam's suit could only work for 8 hours maximum, and even if a nearby ship got a distress signal, Syam's chances of being saved within such a short time was gradually approaching zero as he himself was moving at roughly the speed of sound. Would he float to the Earth or into the abyss of Outer Space?

No, before either of those, a part of his mind calmly predicted, he would float into the debris field of 'Laplace', diced up by the metal shrapnel that was moving at 8 kilometers per second. And at the same time, fear went through all the hairs on his body, filling

the entire spacesuit. Syam cried out: "I don't want to die! I don't want to die! I don't want to die like this, I don't want this life where I'm still eliminated in the end!"

"I have to get back home. My mom and my sister, Sarah, are still waiting for me! I don't want to die I don't want to die I don't want to die—" Syam prayed silently and closed his eyes as he heard the siren that rang because of the erratic breathing. As he opened his eyes again, he saw something strange.

As Syam saw the other side of the burning worker ship, a profile of a person appeared. Then another profile appeared, both wearing spacesuits he had never seen before and using thrusters on their backs to move forward. The profiles grew bigger and bigger, and one of the helmet-like heads gave off a red light and pointed what looked suspiciously like a gun at Syam.

Syam subconsciously used both hands to protect his body, but that huge, golem-like spacesuit ignored Syam and continued to move forward. The shield that was installed on the suit's shoulders , the deep green body and the head was giving of the shine of a single red eye. This wasn't a spacesuit, it was a large object that wasn't human. What was unbelievable was that their heights were close to 20m The suits grazed past Syam like ghosts, one after the other. In front of them was the shining blue figure of the Earth and more large golems that accompanied a large cylinder amid countless explosions.

He had seen this large cylindrical steel bottle with three mirrored wings on TV earlier. These were the basis of the Space Migration plan, the 'Island 3' type Space Colonies. But right now,

those three rectangular wings were tattered, and the steel surface was covered in ugly burn marks. The whole thing looked just like junk hardware. This structure was humanity's greatest construct, and even through TV, he could feel the majestic impact of a brand new space colony as it started to touch the Earth's profile.

The one-eyed giants continued to fire as they escorted the colony, shooting down the resisting ships and the fighter jets. The giants continued to wreak havoc by moving through the colony. The colony was 30 kilometers long and more than 6 kilometers in diameter. As it started to sink into the atmosphere, it began to burn . When Syam realized that the golems were trying to force the colony to hit Earth, he inadvertently shouted: "'STOP IT!'"

"If that kind of thing hit, the world would be in a mess. Mom's on Earth! Sarah's on Earth! Stop it!"

The golems didn't respond though, and the burning colony turned their bodies fiery red. The peeled mirrored blocks and the colony cylinder became a fireball and turned the clouds into steam as they continued to fall onto the Earth. This was the Final Judgment, Syam thought. To end this world that's filled with guilt and sin, and leading the people who did good deeds to Heaven for God to judge...is it unavoidable? He remembered the words of a certain someone who said that 'our destinies are in our hands'. These words blew aside any realistic view, and Syam widened his eyes that he never dared close.

The grey and brown exhaust smoke stained the thin veil of the atmosphere, and the colony became a large meteor that impacted the surface of the Earth. A corner of the Earth's profile shone like

the dawn. As the shine expanded, Syam cried. He was angry at his uselessness, remorseful, depressed about it. He felt lots of emotions that he couldn't sort out explode in him and rise out as steaming liquid from his eyes. Finally, the light became bigger, and a light that was stronger than the sun appeared. Then, suddenly, everything was calm again.

Syam slowly opened his eyes. The spinning of his body stopped . The siren on his life support function stopped, indicating that his breathing and pulse went back to normal. Through the visor, the profile of the Earth looked still. There wasn't any colony that fell, and of course he didn't see the one-eyed golems.

A tear that came from his eye floated in the helmet before being sucked away by the suit's waste removal mechanism. Was that…a dream? Syam was puzzled for a while. That was an intensely realistic nightmare. He didn't think that his brain had the ability to create such an illusion. Syam looked around, still seeing remnants of the dream, and found that he was floating in a field of shrapnel.

The debris, ruptured materials, and broken glass, were obviously the remains of 'Laplace'. The debris scattered in this orbit, and the fragments that had been pushed higher, were flying at the same relative speed as Syam.

The surrounding debris floated around, seemingly stopping. The debris in the vacuum created by Syam's passing would always orbit a space suit. Thinking blankly, Syam had new doubts in his lonely heart, and then noticed something shining in front of him.

The object reflected the light of the Earth, giving off a bright glow, which made Syam think it was a fragment of the concave mirror block. The portable thruster that could be used for another 10 seconds, and Syam used it now to move towards the shining object.

Unbelievably, he didn't have any fears of death; the memory of his vision throbbed inside him in an even greater manner. In the boundless universe, two objects that were as small as mustard seeds would move toward each other at the same speed and touch each other. As Syam faced this once in a few billion moment of coincidence, he started to doubt whether his nerves were all numb.

That object continued to spin slowly, and the shiny surface reflected the light of the world. Syam used the portable thruster bit by bit and let his body stop in front of the object.

It was a little cracked, but the object was a hexagonal shape that was 3 meters in diameter and 30 centimeters thick. Syam closed in on the shiny surface as he slowly stretched out his gloved hand.

And the spacesuit that was reflected in the object itself reached its hand out, as both fingers that were moving in opposite directions touched silently—

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As he reached out and grabbed the emptiness, Syam Vist woke up.

There was nothing, and there was no sign of himself wearing a spacesuit like in the reflection of the object. As he looked from the bed to the ceiling, he could see the starry sky that didn't flicker. Of course, these weren't really stars, but a hologram that was displayed on the domed roof. It was a screen of a starry sky that was meticulously detailed, no different from what his naked eye saw.

He reached out his five fingers toward this fake space as his wrinkled arm grabbed at air—his youthful days were gone. Seeing the back of his age-wrinkled arm, Syam realized that he had merely been dreaming and heaved a sigh of relief. He hadn't woken from cryo-sleep. If he had, he would feel pain as his body became active, and his body couldn't take the pain of fluids being injected into the frozen cells…

Suddenly, he sensed the presence of a person. In this space, everything other than the bed was full of stars and couldn't be distinguished from one another. A man was standing silently at the door. "Is it Cardeas?" Syam asked. The air that shook slightly answered him. He saw the tall and lankly figure of Cardeas Vist walk out from the darkness of the universe and arrive near the bed .

Cardeas was wearing a collared suit and a similar Nehru jacket, the perfect traditional attire of the Vist Foundation. He had a sharp expression under his silver eyebrows, and was more than 60 years old, but it was hard to tell that his body was aging. He wasn't hiding nor was he flaunting his sense of authority, and the straight and primp posture that could defeat all envy and slander made Syam feel that Cardeas was indeed worthy of being the leader of the Vist Foundation.

Besides finance, steel-making, construction and other basic enterprises, the Vist Foundation showed most of its power through logistics, entertainment, and even department stores. One single expression from Cardeas would move complicated, yet diverse crowds and investments, but he was definitely not the king of hidden plans. Having taken over the mantle many years ago, he was used to people referring to the stench of the underground links the Vist Foundation had as the 'fortune', and he was also used to the Foundation's corrupted coexistence with the Federation government. Right in front of Syam was the face of the relative who looked stronger and stronger every day.

Syam had had many children, and most of them became a part of the underground kingdom of the vast Vist Foundation. However, other than his second son's son, Cardeas, nobody else was capable enough to inherit Syam's throne. Throughout history, there were many cases of the first generation starting a enterprise, the second generation building on the enterprise, and the third generation ruining it. However, Cardeas' rebellious nature when he was young caused him to be open-minded and not be poisoned by the Vist Foundation. As a student, he left home, hid his real

name, and joined the Federation's space army as a fighter jet pilot. Such an experience caused him to be a rare breed amongst a family that was already poisoned by authority. Unlike his father, who was an heir before him, the open-minded Cardeas was envied by his own family as he leap-frogged the heir hierarchy, and could continue to maintain his strength without being bothered by them.

However, the never-before-seen rare breed was merely his exterior. Cardeas himself had a complicated side of delicateness and straightforwardness that could read the hearts of any man. Even Syam, who had lived for a long time, couldn't tell what this person, the second head who knew everything, including the truth behind his father's mysterious death, was thinking. However, he would regularly come over to visit Syam, show a cryptic expression and make the old man, who had been sleeping continuously, meaninglessly remember all his past lies. That was the sort of person Cardeas Vist was. Syam was the leader of the Vist family, a family with more than 200 members, including affiliations, but it was an undeniable fact that there was no one but this grandson of his with shom he could share his lies.

Looking down at Syam as he lay on the bed, Cardeas asked " How are you?" His eyes hid a suppressed emotion that couldn't be explained by being second fiddle and being the second head of the family. Syam touched the bracelet-shaped remote control, engraved with the Vist family crest, and took the bottle of water from the table beside him.

"The assumption that cryogenics can regain my youth was thoroughly denied by my body. There's no difference at all. I'm so tired."

Syam felt the cold water enter his wilted body and sighed. Freezing one's body and using cryosleep to slow the metabolism wasn't a complete technology. In fact, only a few research facilities and hospitals were undergoingtesting it, and those that volunteered for the process could be said to be lab rats. However, on hearing that cryogenics were finally practical, Syam bought every institute involved, including the research facility.

Syam would use vacations or recuperation as an excuse to gain time when managing the finances of the Foundation's operations, and the long sleep after his retirement allowed him to gain nearly 20 years. But the primary doctor's diagnosis was that Syam's body was equivalent to that of a 93-year-old. His wife was already dead, half of his children were already dead, and he alone supported his own body, defying the natural aging of time. This was even more awkward than being interrogated, and anyone would find it unbearable to see an old man so insistent on being alive. But even if he was mocked for this, for the sake of the Vist Foundation, for the curse that laid sealed behind the prosperity, he had to continue living even if he had to lie.

As the keeper of <<Laplace's Box>>, the curse that was granted to this world and sealed almost a 100 years ago—

"How is it?"

And the moment where it all had to end arrived. Syam used a business-like tone to ask Cardeas, and Cardeas used a similar to answer, "As we planned, it will be executed 3 days from now."

"I will head to <<Industrial 7>> directly to meet the collector."

"You'll head over yourself?"

"I can't delegate this job to anyone."

Cardeas smiled as Syam said that. As he smiled, he showed the daring nature that defined him when he was a pilot. Even in his late age, he still believes in his own body. Syam, who was unable to get up, could not ever remember feeling like that.

"We can finally use it with the <<UC plan>>. Before I hand it over, I would like to try it."

"The curiosity of an ex-pilot…"

"You can call it desire, but in fact, that is a really good machine. "

The leader of Vist Foundation sounded like he wanted to be a test pilot. "But that's good," Syam thought wryly.

Cardeas was the one who single-handedly decided on the successor, and on the the plan that solved the difficult issue of passing the 'Box' on to a third party. Even though Syam's own interest was somewhat involved, everything was ready. He could only allow Cardeas to do it.

"The <<Unicorn>> was created by the <<UC Plan>>. We must make the beast of possibilities lead the way to <<Laplace's Box>> …"

Syam muttered as he again felt the moral implication behind this. However, he also felt that something like this would always happen when something important occurred. Nothing was planned at the beginning, but coincidences caused things to move about. That's right. Life was just about being manipulated by fate.

At that time, the 17-year-old Syam would run out of the worker ship, float into the endless vacuum, meet the debris field of << Laplace>>, obtain the <<Box>> over there, all because…

Cardeas gave a mystified expression as he saw Syam deep in thought. Syam lifted his eyes and looked at the image of the starry skies that filled the ceiling, and asked, "How's the investigation on the recipient's trust?"

"The fact is that this is a deal with Anaheim Electronics. It's disguised as an underground dealing, but that's the first step to opening the window. In the current situation now, this was the only viable option."

Cardeas named what was undoubtedly the largest enterprise of all the businesses in the Vist Foundation. Like its name, Anaheim began as an electronics company in North America, and was now the largest weapons supplier for the Earth Federation army, and the largest corporation in the world. This electronics company had become a leading military enterprise, and also a subsidiary of the Vist Foundation.

Since Anaheim Electronics was involved in the dealing, it could be seen as Vist Foundation being involved. Though the recipient's guarantee to collect would be the best possible, Cardeas' tone

indicated that he wasn't sure. On one hand, he had to bring blood relatives of his into the business to stabilize the underground empire even more. On the other hand, he had to keep the reins tight to prevent them from going out of control. As he contemplated the loneliness of someone sitting on a throne, Syam asked, "Is it Alberto?" Cardeas looked away and answered simply, "Yes. That man who could barely earn small change."

"No matter what, this is a plan that relies on uncertainty. No matter how much we investigate, we can't possibly lose anything."

Cardeas hid the shakiness inside him and used a dry and stiff voice to continue. But the way he was hiding his wavering so much showed that he still had a bit of youth in him. Syam didn't answer, as if he was impatient with his old and feeble body.

"It's only because we posses <<Laplace's Box>> that Vist Foundation even exits. This is entire affair amounts to breaking a 100-year alliance with the Federation. I admit that I made it a thorough secret, but someone should have realized it already. It's not just the Foundation itself. Even Anaheim Electronics may take action."

"Ever since Melanie left active duty, Anaheim has become more and more useless. It's about time to show them how to continue operations without relying on the Federation."

"This is basically a matter of life and death to them. Martha won 't just sit back and watch, right? We're basically abusing our authority here!"

This was the expression and voice of a man who knew about developing enough authority and influence to get away with murder. Syam looked back at Cardeas' eyes, and pictured his second son's face overlapping Cardeas'. "There's no need to worry ." He said that not only to Cardeas, but also to himself.

"Until they die, those without power can't imagine how much duty and responsibility those with power had to bear."

Syam spoke as he looked up at the starry sky on the ceiling. After a while, Cardeas responded. "You really haven't changed at all, leader," his gentle voice had some grimace behind it. The warm voice of his descendant made Syam lose his breath. He asked himself: "Haven't I changed?"

"Haven't changed? No, I changed a long time ago. That 17 year old man in my dreams, that young man who thought that he'd tasted all of the world's bitterness, probably wouldn't recognize that this old man that's lying on the bed is who he would become. Living more than 100 years is enough to change a person. I don't know when I lost my initial goal. I set up this system for it, and continued to expand the system endlessly just to survive. 100 years is long enough to let a person's or organization's lies grow. The Earth Federation government was like this. The Vist Foundation was like this. Anaheim Electronics was like this. And I also was like this—"

After Syam had been miraculously saved from the explosion of his ship by a civilian ship that was in the area he went back to Earth with the 'Box'. He didn't go back to his hometown, and he never saw his mother or sister again. The poor and foolish young

terrorist was scattered into space dust with his separatist comrades . If news that he had survived leaked out and messed up a certain person's script, then his newly-recovered life, and even his mother and sister would be in danger. Syam's experience with society allowed him to make that prediction with some degree of confidence.

Syam didn't know whether or not it was due to that person's script that all people who were related to the terrorists involved in the destruction of the 'Laplace' station were quickly investigated. The 'organization' and the separatist countries who supported them were all completely annihilated by the Federation Army. The Federation government then immediately reformed as a new government under the slogan of 'Remembering Laplace', and started its eradication of anti-government movements. The ' organization' that planned and executed the terrorist plot was begun by the liberals who wanted to take over the Marcenas administration. Many books and movies questioned if this was the truth, but the majority of people felt that it was just an uncreative conspiracy theory, and praised the Federation's enthusiasm in wiping out terrorism.

It's not that the people were stupid. The stupid ones were the separatists who were facing the start of the Universal Century and still arrogantly calling for people to give up on the administration and wanted civil wars for at least 10 years. People gave up on shapeless ideals and chose reality. It was just a first proof in reality that 'the majority's the smart one'. In Universal Century, the Federation government declared that they had 'erased all terrestrial conflicts in the world', and clearly established the states in the Earth Federation, causing society to move into Universal

Century. What Prime Minister Ricardo Marcenas wanted, humanity 'saying goodbye to the age of gods', was, ironically, completed because of his own death.

At that moment, Syam, who had become someone 'who no longer existed', used this unique trait to start a business. Even at the beginning of the Universal Century, the underground society of triads and gangsters still existed, and the social, political and economic stages that appeared on the forefront wasn't that much different from the Anno Domini Era. Syam managed to get his start here. As he got involved with a war of monopolies, he started getting involved with a certain enterprise whose headquarters was located in the North American region.

That enterprise called Anaheim Electronics was merely a normal-sized electronic company, but once it received Syam's rather beneficial assistance, it started to grow rapidly. That was Syam using the power of the <<Box>> to force the government to defeat opposing companies who were fighting for supremacy. As Syam continued to maintain his relations with the underground societies, he became an ally of Anaheim Electronics and married the daughter of the Managing Director. The family was old famous nobility from France and was a successful installation for 'a person who does not exist anymore' to appear again. And that famous Vist family had a grand old tradition of asking no questions and accepting anyone who had ability, even if the son-in-law that joined them was of unknown origins. Syam used the name of the Vist Foundation to create a public corporation. On the surface, it was a legitammate financial corporation that moved world heritage pieces like art or antiques to space colonies, which were more politically stable than Earth. In actual fact however, it was

used to launder the money earned from various enterprises or investments and provides high ranking officials of the Federation government an opportunity to work after retirement. The co-existence between the Federation and the Vist Foundation was born at that moment.

Under the rigid control of the Federation government, the space migration plan was carried out successfully. Before Side 1 of L5 was complete, construction of Side 2 in L4 started, and the building of space colonies continued to develop. The number of << Island 3>> colonies soon broke 100, and whether people were willing or not, they were dumped into outer space by the millions. Inadvertently, the number of space migrants grew, in stark contrast to the number of residents on Earth. As livestock and agriculture were able to operate in outer space, the age where economy and production couldn't operate without outer space arrived. Strict restrictions were soon put in place on people moving on and off of Earth, and space residents almost had no chance of stepping onto Eath again. They adopted an ideology that Earth was a sacred ground. They viewed Earth as a sanctuary, and thought that it should be preserved as the birthplace of humanity. A lamentation of how space residents tried to sever their yearning for the Earth, and their revenge on those who still stayed on Earth.

In fact, the space resident plan the Federation government pushed forward started to hit a problem by year 0050, after the first phase was completed. Earth originally should have reached the minimum population for the environment to recover, but there were still lots of people staying on Earth and even developing in new areas. The Federation government itself was based on Earth, and only those involved in the government remained on Earth.

The space colonies, bound by the one-sided laws of the central government could not express their views, and could only watch the Earth rotate silently. The Federation raised the 'Laplace Tragedy' to emphasize the danger of moving the government to outer space, but also froze the migration plans to the space colonies. This hypocritical act was almost admitting silently that they had 'dumped enough people', causing great dissatisfaction amongst the space residents. A certain thought appeared in a corner of outer space as if it gathered all the unhappiness.

The politician who raised this thought was Zeon Zum Deikun, and his beliefs were later adopted as the Principality of Zeon. Zeon carefully included the Nationalism of Sides that demanded self-government of space colonies, along with the sanctification of the Earth, becoming an ideal that included space biochemistry of mankind. Those space residents that were disillusioned by the space migration plan were awakened by Zeon's Principles. The Federation government ignored this moment, but the Zeon movement spread from Side 3, behind the moon, and finally, half a century after the space migration plan began, Side 3 declared its independence.

It was a proud moment of revolution to the now-independent residents of Side 3, but to the Federation government, it was the first real threat they faced since they eliminated the separatists. The Federation government started to increase its suppression of Side 3 and increase the size of their space army. It started to build the latest model of the <<Salamis>>-class space navigation ships, far larger than the ships that guarded 'Laplace'. In response, Side 3 built up its national defense in case of any aggression. Both sides remained at tense relations until the year 0079 in the Universal

Century. Not caring about the implications on economics and internal affairs, the self-proclaimed Principality of Zeon, Side 3, declared war on the Earth Federation, and the grand war began.

Since the war lasted for one year, it later became known as the One Year War. The Federation and Zeon continued to invest in Universal Century technology without restraint and the situation escalated into a war of mass destruction, becoming the most devastating war in human history. After this year of disaster, where more than half the population was wiped out, the Principality of Zeon finally lost the war, and an armistice was signed. The Earth Federation managed to keep its governmental structure. However, the escalating war between Earth and Space under the Principality of Zeon never ended, as there were many other conflicts for another 10 years and more, adding salt to the wounds of Earth before it could recover from the One Year War.

Such large expenditure and wastage caused Anaheim Electronics to gain a stable income through war, and it quickly became the largest enterprise on Earth. They absorbed and took over the military industry of the old Principality of Zeon, and almost single-handedly managed all the development of the Earth Federation's armaments. They used the excuse of charging each customer independently to work dealings with Anti-Earth Union Group, and did business fairly with both Earth and Space. Since Anaheim Electronics' resources mostly went to the Moon, people often dubbed them 'the rulers of the Moon', and others would even directly call them 'Merchants of Death'. However, behind Anaheim, there was the shadow of Vist Foundation and the 'Box' that allowed for their monopoly and the elimination of any competitors.

The Vist Foundation hid the <<Box>> for nearly 100 years, and could manipulate the Federation government whenever and however they wanted to. At the start of the Universal Century, the <<Box>> landed in Syam's hands at a chance of 1 in a billion. Humanity broke free from the chains of gravity, religions, and race , and should have gotten a <<Box>> that represented the New Covenant of the Universal Century, <<Laplace's Box>>. It sealed a seal that was 100 years long, and still remained with him. The dry and feeble body lay on the bed as Syam sighed.

He once had a chance to open the <<Box>>. He had a chance to immediately let the world collapse from the base on and bring 'the supposed future' the Universal Century should have had. Thus, he created the Vist Foundation. And even if he had to rely on cryogenics, he had to survive, to bear what is an overly heavy responsibility and duty for a human. "No, I shouldn't be thinking about excuses. I just don't have the courage and strength to open the box. I'm scared of the illusion I saw—the hellish scenes of space colonies falling on Earth. Yet I watched this cruel imagery become reality and only focused my heart and soul on improving the Foundation's prosperity. I'm just a coward who lost my initial goal after 100 years, a coward who became distrusting of humans and still couldn't give up on my life and end it all."

The night side of the Earth was moving above them, and there was the thin veil of the atmosphere floating around it. Earth looked like it did 100 years ago, but in fact, countless 'colony drops ' caused a large amount of dust to scatter, and the Earth's atmosphere looked as if it were stained. Syam watched the thin veil of the atmosphere and wanted to look at the imprint of this

guilt. Guilt that wouldn't disappear for another thousand years. At this moment, he saw a human-shaped object pass in front of the Earth.

It looked as large as a little thumb, though the human-shaped object that was moving through the stars at high speed wasn't a human in a spacesuit, but a mobile suit. As Minovsky particles, which allowed for easy jamming of radar and electronic devices, were discovered, a mobile, human-shaped weapon became mainstream in space combat. The one-eyed giants he saw in his vision almost 100 years ago were now a common weapon, manufactured by Anaheim Electonics' assembly line, replacing tanks and fighter jets, and becoming the main weapon of the Earth Federation.

The first nation to successfully develop mobile suit technology was the Principality of Zeon. It brought an advantage to the Zeon forces just when they were severely disadvantaged. However, as the memories of the One Year War faded, this story was merely a footnote in a corner of a history book. After several years, once this Side 3, once called the Republic of Zeon, gives up its self-independence and returns to the Federation government, people will forget about that time. It's only to be expected that the space residents' passion in its demands for self-government and upsurge of classes would fall apart as the Principality of Zeon declined and finally disappeared in this dark and cold outer space.

The time was Universal Century 0096—the fervor for revolution had gone, and in the universe of concepts, even the stars were so cold.

"…It's time to activate <<Laplace's Box>>."

Feeling a chill all over himself, Syam spoke. "If the space residents lose this chance of independence, the Earth Sphere shall remain shut."

"But this may bring even more chaos to the world."

Cardeas responded calmly as he stood beside the bed. His lanky body looked like a pastor who witnessed a death on a patient's bed , but also like the figure of a death god. Syam smiled,

"It's better than being in stasis forever and slowly dying. If I can hand <<Laplace's Box>> over to anyone else, my role as guardian will be over. I don't want to defy nature and watch my grandson die."

"That's enough for the person that's to be entrusted with the << Box>>." After saying that, Syam again confirmed that that person wasn't himself. No matter if it was him or the Vist Foundation, he could only wait. Though they benefited from the magic of the << Box>> and had the power to move the world, they were content to be mere observers, watching everything. Like the meaning of the word itself, they were just watching.

A century had passed since Syam had found the <<Box>>, and there were signs that such observers were being born. Having entered the new environment called Outer Space, humanity gradually gained power that exceeded that of normal people. 100

years ago, the people gathered at 'Laplace' expected it earlier than anyone else. The god that resides in us. God's blessing called possibility was moving through the countless space colonies.

The new humans, called Newtypes by Zeon Zum Deikun; they will definitely be able to open the <<Box>>, ride on the beast of possibilities <<Unicorn>>, and see the contents of the <<Box>>, bringing the prayer of redemption from 'Laplace' to now and setting the Universal Century on the right path.

Of course, there's no evidence to prove these theories, and Syam knew that he was being reckless, but there wasn't much time left. He had to take action before it was too late to salvage the situation. Before the world completely collapsed, before the god known as possibilities extinguished itself, before this rotting thing that couldn't endure another frozen sleep…

"Can you forgive me?"

This was just him being opinionated, as Syam finally asked the question that burdened him with the heavy lies he knew about.

"This might bring an end to a world. Is there anyone who can forgive you other than me?"

Cardeas' answer to this was extremely clear. The lies and the pains were all gone in that instant. Syam was unable to respond to this kinship and looked at Earth displayed on the wall.

"You're willing to forgive me? You're forgiving this devil who took action on his own children in order to protect the 100 years of

silence the Vist Foundation protects? You're forgiving this inhuman grandfather who took your father away? You're forgiving this man whose thoughts may be opinionated and send the world to destruction—"

Earth was about to face dawn from the front. The sun's glow appeared on the long arc profile, and the white light shone through the atmosphere, causing the blue that was locked under the color of night to recover.

The light shone on Syam's bed and Cardeas' body as their two shadows became one. Syam basked in this intense glow that could burn all the remaining lies away. As the scene in front of him blured, Syam again fell into a deep sleep.

Chapter 1

Part 1

The ship's alarm sounded. Despite the goosebumps the sound caused, it made the mind focus as well. The girl went to window on the wall.

Outside the plastic board window was the vacuum of outer space. Right now, neither the Earth nor the moon could be seen, and only the multitude of starry spots in the sky lit up the silent darkness. This ship was moving forward at a very fast speed, but the stars outside the window weren't moving at all. It was like being locked in a still darkness.

The girl recalled how she would ask her maidservant, Lamias, the reason for this phenomenon, as she didn't understand it herself . The ever-patient Lamias would give a beaming smile and say: " Princess, that's because the stars are too far away, so they don't see us moving."

That was the excuse the adults gave, but it wasn't without merit. The 17-year-old girl knew this. Lamias was a good maidservant, but she had already been dead for almost ten years now. The girl's youth was shrouded in mystery, and she who was called a princess remained in her memories. But for the moment, the past she bore had to be forgotten for a while.

Because she had forgotten her past, she didn't need a name right now. She stowed herself aboard this ship because she was

just a nameless person who was going to where she should be going, to meet the person she should be meeting. That was all.

<Scatter the Minovsky particles, ASAP! Get them to combat levels!>

<One enemy ship. Most likely a Clop-class battleship.>

“That's no ordinary patrol. It was waiting in ambush in this area . There will be enemy mobile suits attacking. Don't let your guard down.”

The crew was scattering Minovsky particles, which could disrupt electromagnetic waves and jam electronics like radar, around the ship, but it was still possible to communicate with internal ship-wide communications. As the ship rang with the people's voices and the sounds of operation, the girl heard the low grunt of the ship’s captain, Suberoa Zinnerman, over the intercom and looked at the darkness outside the window.

As she looked, she saw a pink light fly past the window. It was the glow of a mega-particle cannon beam. The glowing, high-energy beam weapons were due to the development of Minovsky physics. The Earth Federation was shooting at this ship to capture it. This ship ignored the command to stop and continued to spray Minovsky particles around itself as it accelerated away. The next shot wouldn't be a warning shot. The enemy should have realized by now that a civilian ship couldn't be this fast.

The concentrated mega-particles were moving at very close to light speed, and would immediately pierce through the ship's armor if it was a direct hit. Even if it only grazed the hull, the high temperature of the particles themselves might melt a hole in the wall. The girl kicked herself off from the wall of the dim cabin, and moved over to the cupboard in the corner of the room. The cupboard was designated as storage, and its contents were fastened down due to the zero gravity environment. Inside were the three days worth of food and water she had smuggled in, and a spacesuit.

The girl pulled everything out of the cupboard, and used the resulting inertia to push her body about, using zero gravity to put on the spacesuit with minimal hassle. This cabin was hardly used, so the crew used it as a storeroom. If the ship was damaged, the life support system in this part of the ship would be one of the first systems to be cut off. In the likely situation of a vacuum, the supplies that were fastened to the wall or the floor would be frozen. The girl didn't want to think of the worst case scenario, where she would be sent flying out of the ship, and put on her space suit's large helmet.

<Two enemy ships approaching fast, firing high-energy particle beams!>

<There’s a mobile suit!>

<It’s on a Geta. Estimated time of contact: T-minus 320.>

<They'll catch us before we enter the debris field. Alright, hurry up and send Marida out. Let her chase the flies away.>

Though they all looked like members of a shipping crew, the people on the bridge all had combat experience and sounded very calm. Right now, they would be in spacesuits, moving to the bridge, which would be filled with flashing red lights. The girl remembered the that bridge was as cramped as the cockpit in a plane; she remembered the thoroughly moustached face of Zinnerman as he sat on the captain's seat; and she wondered whether she should tell him that she was here. If a battle began, it would be best for her to be in the safe protected zone. If she was discovered as a stowaway, she would definitely be sent there anyway. If she died here without being found, it would really be a futile death.

No, she couldn't. If he knew that she was on board as a stowaway, Zinnerman may change the ship's projected course and go back to the *Palau*. Even if he didn't, she would be locked up and watched closely. She wouldn't be able to achieve her goal, she wouldn't be able to got out, and she wouldn't be able to meet the person she had to meet. This outcome would cause the deaths of even more people.

This was the only chance, the girl told to herself. She knew this was a reckless act, but there was no other way. This was to prevent Earth from being covered in battle and causing hundreds of thousands of deaths. She could only do that...

<The Kshatriya is ready for launch.>

<Target the enemy Mobile Suits. Ignore the mothership. The *Garencieres* is fast enough to shake them off.>

Zinnerman's deep, coarse voice could be heard of the intercom, and a clear female voice could be heard responding <Understood> . The girl remembered the face of the solitary woman, Marida Cruz , who should be of the same age as she was, and looked outside the window. She saw the silver form of the battlefield, and numerous scale powder-like things glittered around the ship. The shutter suddenly appeared and covered the windows as the ship The *Garencieres*' was entering battle mode, and all the windows had their protective shutters on.

The only image screen was on the inside of the bridge window, and the protective shutter on the inside of the cabin windows didn 't have such a convenient function. The girl left the wall and hid her body in the gap between some boxes. Under the light of a weak standing lamp, she used the tape that she had included in her supplies to tie her hands together, and focused her attention on the wireless communicator inside her helmet.

She would die when she would, looking outside to scare herself wouldn't do anything to change that. She might as well gather as much information as possible to deal with the current situation. She calmly and clearly told this to herself as she tucked her knees in and hugged herself in the spacesuit.

Suddenly, she felt a chill. It was a chill that the life support of the spacesuit couldn't adjust, a chill that entered deep inside her heart. As she had often gotten involved with the battlefield when

she was young, her body was already numb to the fear of it, and this chill seemed to be the price. The girl let herself be the instrument of silence as she closed her eyes and waited for the chill to fade.

Part 2

The transport ship *Garencieres* was 112 meters in length, and it was cone-shaped. Its maximum weight capacity was over 500 tons. The bridge was at the front of the ship, which was shaped like the nose of an old airplane. The shape made it look like the designer factored in air resistance, and one could tell that the ship could fly in an atmosphere, and could be used as a transport between Earth and space. It was a model commonly used by shipping companies in the past, but it was hardly seen anymore.

The words "Ribakoona Trading" on the side indicated the *Garencieres* was registered as a civilian transport ship, but that wasn't the whole truth. Right now, the large door on the back of the cone-shaped ship was opening, and the sliding cargo crane was emerging. Instead of carrying cargo though, the crane was carrying a giant, human-shaped robot.

The robot had four limbs that were somewhat thick at the end, and a bulge at the top of the waist that had a beak-shaped piece of armor. The head had a something like a large crest poking out, as well as a single eye-like laser sensor. The almost 20 meter tall humanoid frame had four shoulder-mounted wing-like pods, each one about as tall as the main body. This dark green machine should, by all rights, be called a giant, and the shape was far from a normal human's. However, its humanoid appearance was far too

defined to be called anything but a giant. In this age of mobile suits , giant human-shaped weapons that had the power of a battleship' s main cannon, this machine's profile was somewhat strange. However, like most mobile suits, it had a ball-shaped cockpit in its abdomen, covered in many layers of armor. The figure of the mobile suit's pilot was already wearing a space suit, sitting in the cockpit, starting the machine.

"Target acquired. There's a Jegan that's somewhat fast, possibly a commander type."

Marida Cruz looked through the full screen display on the inside wall of the cockpit, and a small window showed the details of the enemy mobile suit.

<This means it's not a coincidence that we met, doesn't it?>, she asked emotionlessly

<We'll be entering the debris field soon. Hurry up and finish it off before coming back.> Captain Zinnerman responded through the wireless communicator.

<Understood, master.>

Marida heard Zinnerman breathe in a more tense manner than before, then came the usual words <Don't call me master>. The reason it was odd that they would meet a Federation ship here was that it was rare for them to patrol this area of space. However, it was really abnormal to stop a trading ship on its designated course and ask for an inspection. They had even sent out specially equipped mobile suits.

<This may be because the Federation Army already knew our true identity and objective and set an ambush in the debris field>. Zinnerman had to deduce who leaked the information about his ship, and wondered what he should do next.

“That’s right,” thought Marida, “The next step…. Master doesn’ t need to be bothered about this. This is why I exist." Ignoring all other thoughts, Marida put her hands on the control sticks—the hemisphere Arm Raker that allowed all 5 fingers to be gripped together.

“Marida Cruz, Kshatriya, launching.”

As the restraints on the machine were released, the abnormally-shaped mobile suit, Kshatriya, slowly descended from the hangar. It wasn't really accurate to call it “descending”, since there was no concept of up or down in outer space, but the machine had the feeling of being dangled as it was released from the hangar at the bottom of the ship. Marida released the activation control thrusters and moved under the *Garencieres*, until she was more than 100 meters from the ship, and stepped on the pedal. The four main thrusters on the wing-like pods let out white light all at once. The Kshatriya left behind the inertial motion of the of the *Garencieres*, spun and approached from behind its target.

In the ball-shaped cockpit was one and a half meters across, and the screen of displayed a full 360 degrees of scenery. The intense rays of the stars hit Marida's eyes, and a bystander would feel that Marida's cockpit was suddenly floating in the midst of the stars, and that she was flying through them. However, the image of outer space that was shown around her wasn't a real scene, but a

computer-generated image of outer space that used images of constellations to aid positioning.

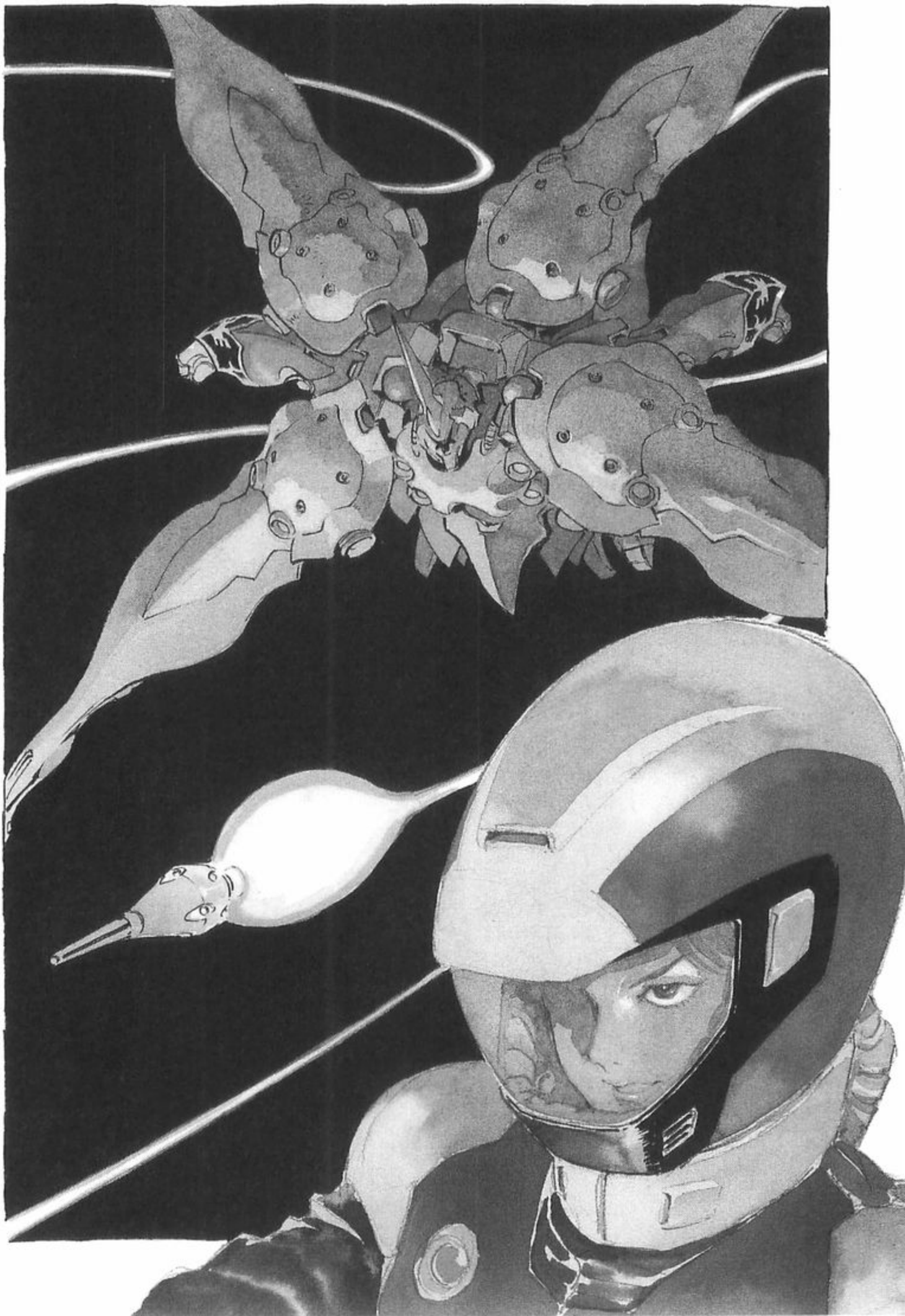
One part of the screen showed an enlarged image of three targets. The optical sensor couldn't capture very much at such a large distance, so it was a rough image. But in contrast, the model number of the targets, RGM-89, was rather clear. It was the mainstream mobile suits of the Earth Federation, the Jegan. The one leading the attack was a special type that had an S-shape extending from its back. The mobile suits abandoned their Geta as they scattered and closed in. Geta was the common name for mobile suits flight packs, used for long range attacks, acting as a flat bed to transport the mobile suits and send them into battle without wasting the mobile suit's fuel. In short, it was something like a miniature boat for mobile suits. Marida didn't know why they were called Geta.

The three mobile suits were each wielding their main weapon, a beam rifle, as they closed in on Marida. She sensed that the enemies wanted to surround her from three directions outside her weapon's range, and decided that this battle would be difficult. It wasn't that hard to take down three Jegan, but missing one would open a hole in the defenses of the *Garencieres*. Rather than being confident or bold in this situation, Marida merely used her head to think of the best way to handle the situation, and let her mobile suit decelerate suddenly.

The four pods swung forward, and the main thrusters on the tips spurt flames ahead of the Kshatirya, causing the suit's speed to immediately drop from meters per second to meters per minute and finally, nothing at all. As her back bore the sudden force of

slowing down, Marida endured the discomfort of her eyeballs feeling like they was going to fly out of her skull, and her fingers swelling as the blood flowed into them. Then she muttered, " Funnels".

Numerous exhaust lights on the inside of the four wing pods lit up as a pair of two-meter long objects came from each of them, totalling eight of these small things things altogether. They moved normally, and as they hovered around the Kshatriya, their thrusters activated and they rushed to their targets like a bullet.



The sensor cannons were shaped like their name, funnels. The conical objects gathered and dispersed, striking the Jegans that were still outside the Kshatriya's shooting range. This pattern wasn't automatic, nor was it mechanical long-range control. In a battlefield saturated with Minovsky particles, it was impossible to use electromagnetic waves to control anything, and it was impossible to use a computer to launch an attack on one spot. This weapon, the funnel, was controlled by the pilot's brainwaves.

The Psycho communicator, commonly know as psycommu, was a brainwave guiding system that recorded the brain signals of the pilot, magnified them and sent them as instructions to the funnel units. These brainwaves were also called psycho waves, and they didn't cause the Minovsky particles to react. Thus, the psycommu didn't run the risk of interference like normal electromagnetic wave transmissions. As long as the pilot could control them, the funnels could be thought of as completely invincible in the modern battlefield, as Minovsky particles would prevent all electronic devices from working. And as it was required to use a large mobile suit like the Kshatriya to protect the pilot and engage in close range combat on the battlefield, the funnels truly became a necessary piece of equipment.

Of course, not everyone could use this system. Even through many improvements, the psycommu system still caused a lot of physical and mental stress on the pilot. However, Marida could operate it better than anyone. More accurately, she had been created to be able to operate the funnels.

The funnels continued to spin as they attacked the two Jegan behind Marida. Due to their size, the funnels weren't much larger than space junk. It would be hard to detect them, even with visual sensors. The funnels quickly fired their control thrusters and gradually pinned the Jegans down before shooting out lasers. The Mega-particle energy beams glowed pink and fired completely through the Jegans that hadn't detected the enemy approaching at all. The funnels were only equipped with a small rechargeable battery, and so the intensity of their laser was low, and didn't have much energy. However, they did have the power to shoot through a mobile suit's armor. The Jegan pilots panicked and started firing beam shots randomly, trying to hit their invisible attackers. However, the funnels continued to destroy the Jegans bit by bit. Electrical transfer fluids continued to shoot out from damaged critical areas like blood, and the Jegans, smaller than the green Kshatriya, were painfully struggling. By this point, the funnels were like a flock of sharks hunting down a whale as they lunged forward to attack.

One, two. Without checking for the lights of explosions, Marida sensed that the two Jegans had already been blown to bits and concentrated on the remaining special unit. Though its backups were already destroyed, the unit didn't slow down at all as it continued to close the distance between itself and the Kshatriya. Marida decided that there was no need to let out new funnels and again pushed the Kshatriya forward.

The psycommu showed an image of the specially equipped unit that was more like a human, with added armor and thrusters. Before it entered the Kshatriya's range, the recoilless rocket

launcher the Jegan was wielding let out a flash, and a physical shell with a diameter of 380 millimeters came flying at the Kshatriya. This high-powered shot was a normal size for a mobile suit's recoilless rifle, and though it had the disadvantage of being small, the destructive power it contained was be larger than that of a beam weapon. Right now, it was in shotgun mode, and as it exploded, hundreds of metallic balls scattered around the Kshatriya. However, Marida had expected this, and dodged with the smallest of movements. The pilot of the specially-equipped mobile suit seemed to have also expected it to be dodged and used the scattered pellets as a smokescreen, firing his thrusters and getting above the Kshatriya.

With this, the battle became a typical mobile suit battle, as was commonly seen in this era, as if to prove why humanoid weapons were so valued. The specially equipped Jegan's missile launcher again fired another shell, and let out the missiles that were mounted on the shoulders. The Khastriya activated its main thruster to move up and grazed past the missiles as they passed. She then deployed the four wing-pods horizontally, spun the mobile suit 90 degrees, and flew forward. The Kshatriya slipped through the Jegan's trajectory, and into the dark outer space to get the initiative.

Normally, only thruster exhaust is needed to change directions in the vacuum of outer space. However, mobile suits had another system called the Active Mass Balance Control, or AMBAC system. Though there's no gravity in outer space to cause weight, objects still have all their mass, and a one Newton push would require one Newton of force; the force required would be equivalent to the force exerted. The main principal behind the AMBAC system is

Newton’s third law of motion: for every action, there is an equal but opposite reaction. Simply put, the system could control any of a mobile suit's limbs, and use the “equal but opposite reaction” to change the direction the mobile suit faces. This was the one of the main reasons why mobile suits were the strongest weapons of the era, standing head and shoulders above any other.

The Kshatriya skilfully used its four thick limbs and four wing-pods to maneuver as it closed in on the Jegan via a complicated trajectory. The two machines' thrusters were glowing, and these two humanoid robots gave every impression of dancing in outer space. The explosions of the bullets flashed on the screens of both suit's cockpits. Under cover of the explosions, Marida closed in on the enemy. The Kshatriya's pods opened like a blooming metallic flower, with the one shining eye in the middle. The metallic flower was covered with beam cannons, and it used the impact from the explosions to become the most savage and beautiful flower in outer space.

These images were all displayed on the cockpit screens in the Jegan. Both machines were within a few meters of each other, an extremely close distance in outer space, and could use their optical sensors to look directly at one another. A battlefield saturated with Minovsky particles meant close-range combat, and thus it was common to see machines go in close for attacks. In situations like this, there was a need for a one-on-one battle, which was another reason mobile suits were designed as humanoids.

The moment before she crossed the Jegan’s path, Marida switched from the firearms to the beam saber and aimed at the abdomen of the Jegan. The Ksatriya used its mechanical hand to

grab the handle of the beam saber and draw it out from the wrist holster. Particles of light shot more than ten meters from the handle, and formed a blade that hacked through the Jegan's abdomen.

The Jegan seemed like it wanted to draw its own beam saber, but reacted too slowly. The beam saber that could cut through 30 centimeters of metal in a second, melted through the Jegan's abdomen, and a metallic sound struck Marida's mind through the suit.

<Damn you, Sleeves...!>

At the same time Marida heard the voice of the other pilot, whether through wireless signal, or a sense other than her hearing, she did not know. No matter how she heard the voice, though, things ended here. The beam saber slashed through the armor of the Jegan, going straight through the cockpit, immediately vaporizing the pilot, and slicing the entire machine in half. The nuclear reactor inside the Jegan didn't explode as the machine was hacked in half at the waist, and floated away. The burnt remains were still giving off sparks, and the remains of the machine floated past this enemy called the "Sleeve" and silently disappeared.

Marida watched silently as she stowed her beam saber. The wrist of the Kshatriya had a place to keep a beam saber, and was adorned with a crest that looked like a wing—something that looked like a sleeved decoration. The mobile suits of the organization Marida belonged to all had such a design, which was why the Federation called them "Sleeves", but that wasn't important to Marida at all.

No, it wasn’t just the nickname that wasn’t important. Even the ideal of being an Anti-Earth Federation organization or the content of this mission weren't important. Humans were animals that could think and had curiosity, but Marida felt that this definition wasn't suited for her.

Just like how a man was born a man and a woman was born a woman, Marida Cruz was born a pilot, and lived as a pilot. To follow her master's orders and destroy the enemy mobile suits was her only desire. Perhaps the *Garencieres* should enter the debris field before the enemy mothership arrived. Right now, though, Marida had to return to her ship as soon as possible, do a damage inspection on the Kshatriya, readjust and resupply. Once she was done, she would prepare for the next launch and get as much rest as possible. She wouldn't do anything else, and wouldn't think of anything else. Marida didn't feel this was in any way unnatural, and she didn't feel sad about it either.

However, once the battle ended, as she relaxed from her tense state after having concentrated for so long, her empty soul would feel some pain. The emotions she suppressed in the battlefield would awaken, and her mind would complain about the unhappiness. As the fire of the funnels destroyed the enemy machines, it felt as if the psycommu system were working in reverse, as she felt really complicated, uneasy about the dying scrams of the pilots that entered her mind. When she sliced the specially-equipped mobile suit, it felt as if she had personally sliced a pilot to death, and the final cringe before he died would

cause an uneasiness in both her mind and soul. After recalling the funnels, Marida switched back to full screen view to let the cockpit screens show outer space.

Marida reached up, took off the helmet of her spacesuit, and loosened the hair that was tied behind her head. The straight, waist-length hair was pushed aside, and the hair of a healthy 18-year-old should have floated infront of her eyes, but Marida was instead staring at the starry sky.

The cockpit screens of a mobile suit wouldn't show outer space as it actually appeared if there wasn’t some specific reason. It wasn ’t just because it was hard to accurately capture and display, but also because the risk of the pilot panicking was too great. The reality of outer space was so dark, grim and filled with emptiness that it seemed as if it would swallow all existence. However, Marida liked the view to be this way.

During the short time she had before she returned to the ship, Marida took off her helmet and relaxed her entire body as she remained in the vacuum of vast emptiness. This let her feel as if the uneasiness inside her would be washed away. Each star would perform a music she had never heard before, bringing her to another place. To an outer space that didn't have war or unhappiness, that people didn't need space suits to explore.

Of course, such a place didn't exist. Outside this cockpit was an outer space of vacuum deadly to humans, and a reality filled with problems—the human social circle known as the Earth's boundary. Marida adjusted the main camera of the Kshatriya and looked at Earth, far away enough that it was only the size of a tennis ball.

Like many space migrants, she had never stepped onto Earth even once. Marida knew by the object floating in front of the blue body of the Earth that the *Garencieres'* target was near. Floating in one of the Lagrange points between Earth and the Moon was the rubble of the past war; this debris field was home to numerous destroyed space colonies and spaceships.

Humanity had created space colony settlements, known as Sides, in the five Lagrange points around Earth and the Moon, and most of humanity had been living in outer space for almost 100 years by now. The wounds of this grand-scale war ran deep, and the debris field was one of them. The place people used to call Side 5 was no longer there, and what remained was a floating graveyard of countless frozen remains. The final destination of Marida and the rest, the colony known as 'Industrial 7', should be located somewhere deep inside this graveyard.

Right now, though, it was impossible to find the colony in the large amount of rubble, but she did find the *Garencieres* which began to move towards her. Marida again checked to see if there were any pursuers behind her before pushing the Kshatriya on. The nuclear rocket engine sounded through the machine as it jerked, and the force of acceleration pressed on her uneasy body. The helmet that was floating in the cockpit hit the rear screen and let out a light thud.

Part 3

The moment the vibration of the alarm clock woke him, Banagher Links thought *"I am so out of it today."*

As he turned the alarm off, he saw the time was 4:20 AM. After confirming the time, he stealthily got out of bed. It was still pitch black outside. He could barely see the contents two-man dorm room: the beds, desks, or dressers that were still covered in darkness. The only sounds Banagher could hear were the clock ticking away the seconds, and his roommate Takuya Irei snoring away on the other bed.

It was, of course, impossible for a room inhabited by two stinky guys to be anything resembling clean, as there would always be things like discarded clothing and empty food containers. However, there was still some order in the mess, and Banagher was able to grab his shirt and jeans without turning on the lights, and tiptoed his way to the bathroom. He quickly combed and washed himself, then looked at himself in the mirror above the sink.

He had dark brown eyes and the skin color of someone with Middle Eastern blood. His long hair was the same color as his eyes, and it was rather smooth even if he didn't take care of it. Upon seeing that his 16-year-old boyish face was completely ordinary and nothing special, a disjointed feeling rose up in him. However, this feeling only persisted until he put on his coat.

It was the official jacket of the Anaheim Electronics Industrial College. The logo of the parent company, Anaheim Electronics, was sewn on the left side of the blue, fireproof materials. This jacket wasn't fashionable enough that it could be worn outside shop classes, but Banagher had modified the extra one he bought and used it as casual wear. The main modification was on the

collar; the crest of the Anaheim Electronics Industrial College, AEIC, looked like it had been removed. Of course, Banagher hadn' t removed it himself, rather a second-hand shop he was familiar with did the job for him.

Banagher finished putting on his clothing to help suppress the disjointed feeling. What replaced it was the realism of him being part of the large enterprise of Anaheim Electronics. Once he slapped his face to help keep himself awake, Banagher left the bathroom, checked that his roommate was still deep in dreamland, and began to move silently towards the room's exit. On the way, however, he tripped over an object roughly the size of a basketball laying on the floor.

<Hello, Banagher. Hello, Banagher.>

The two circular disks on the ball-shaped body flapped out like ears as the impact from the kick activated the Haro unit, and made it speak in a loud, but monotonous voice. Banagher frantically tried to hold down the Haro as it moved around the floor. He soflty growled "Quiet, Haro!" But it was too late. Takuya, who had had the pillow covering his head, wriggled around his bed, and the moment his eyes met Banagher's, he sat up.

"Damn it, Banagher!" Takuya roared out, "You don't care about our agreement at all do you? We aren't supposed to sneak out!"

His tea-colored hair was all messy, and he was so angry he had even forgotten to wipe away the drool from his mouth. Though the impression his roommate usually gave was something like an affectionate big brother, his popularity with the ladies would likely

drop were they to see him like this. However, Banagher didn't have time to think about popularity, and as he carried Haro out of the apartment, he asked: "Didn't you set your clock five minutes fast, Takuya?" Banagher put Haro on the floor, and grabbed the sandwich he had bought yesterday. Haro was jumping energetically like a self-propelled ball, out through the automatic door that led to the hallway.

Banagher ran through the school campus that was linked to the dorm, down the stairs that linked the school atrium and the road, and arrived at an electric car station. The stations were managed by computers, and would automatically send vehicles to locations with the highest frequency of use. Anyone with an ID card could use them. Banagher took a bite from his sandwich as he got into the open, two-seat electric car. He inserted his ID card to into a slot on the dashboard, pressed the start button, grabbed the steering wheel, and stepped on the accelerator.

<Very improper, Banagher.>

Perhaps because Banagher was holding the steering wheel with the only one hand, the other held his sandwich, Haro had spoken up, flashing its optical sensors at the same time. Haro had a first-level artificial intelligence in its ball-shaped body and was supposed to be a toy robot marketed toward children. This normally wouldn't be something belonging to a vocational student in the equivalent of high school, but Banagher had modified it, and carried it around like a pet.

The streets were quiet before dawn. Banagher swallowed the last of his sandwich and looked up through the windshield at the

sky. Through the clouds scattered in the night sky, he could see numerous lights flickering. They looked like stars, but they weren't . Those flickering lights were the lights from the windows of shops , factories, and skyscraper windows that stayed open throughout the night. It was the city lights that just so happened to be above Banagher. The carpet of lights was about 6000 meters above, and covered the entire sky in a gradual arc. In the gap between skyscrapers in front of him, Banagher could see the lights climb to the sky ahead of him. If anyone in those lights above were to look at the sky, the headlights of the electric car and the surrounding street lights would look like stars to them.

The artificial ground within the large cylinder of the space colony was covered with houses, office buildings, parks, and other important things that made up everyday society. The internal structure of almost all space colonies were like this. The cylinder that was 6.4 kilometers across would spin at a definite speed, creating a centrifugal force on the inside of the walls, creating artificial gravity equivalent to gravity on Earth. The constructed ground on the inside of the cylinder were on large areas 3.2 kilometers long and 1.6 kilometers wide. Big enough that from the inside the ground wouldn't look like it curved with the wall of the colony. At most, the joints where the plates met would look a little slanted.

Day and night inside the space colony were created via the mirrors outside the cylinder itself, or by an artificial sun at the center, which also helped in adjusting the temperature and replicating the seasons. The time was set to Greenwich Mean Time, and the climate was set to emulate the Northern Hemisphere. Unless there were special issues for tourism, these basic settings

were used for every space colonies. Thus, right now, on the 7th of April, at 4:30 AM, the residential area itself was neither too hot, nor too cold, and most of the colonies were still in middle of night. The billions of residents of those colonies were, just like the residents of this one, 'Industrial 7', were also waiting in the night for spring.

Banagher was one of those billions of people, and had been getting up before daylight for a while now, in order to get to the space dock to work. The work involved clearing junk away from the outside of space colonies. It was tough getting up early in the morning, but it wasn't that bad, since Banagher could easily sleep through the general education periods in school. It was worth more to work three hours before lessons though, since three hours of the morning shift payed more than working five hours after school on the evening shift did.

Takuya worked at the same place as Banagher; the first one to clock in got a mini mobile suit that was better-suited for the kind of work they did, and their wages would increase based on their job performance. Thus, the two of them would race to see who would get out first. Though underhanded methods were considered poor form, everything else was fair game. So Banagher and Takuya were always thinking of ways to sneak out of their dorm without waking the other one. Right now, the chances of winning were about 50/50.

All that being said though, the two of them were still doing well in their studies. They were attending a vocational school where it

was required for them to stay in the dorm, and their clothing and food were provided for them. The most they needed was some spending money. *"This is just a game,"* Banagher thought.

"A game to shake off my roommate and getting a high capability mini mobile suit. A game to shake off studies, using work to get rid of boredom. Everyone else is the same. Enjoying the game of student's relaxation and not facing that disjointedness…

<Working all the time. Study some more.>

Babagher had no idea how Haro reached this realization that struck through him. "This is seperate from studying!" Banagher answered back, feeling that the robot had a very good read on him, "The vocational students here will all become employees of Anaheim. It's not like it's a bad thing to test out this mini mobile suit first."

On the one hand, he wondered how he ended up making this kind of excuse, but on the other hand, he felt really satisfied by it. Banagher again felt that 'disjointed' feeling. This was a future he wouldn't have even dared dream of a year ago, and as he looked forward to the twelve wonderful years ahead of him, he felt as if he were just drifting with the flow, and yet feeling a bit bad for walking on the path others had set in stone. However, there wasn't anything else he really wanted to do. He would maintain his grades in the middle-high tier, party with others, and feel extremely out of place. The psychological reason behind this disjointed feeling had started when Banagher was very young, and had now became a bad habit.

The electric car moved through the colony's residential area and into a heavy-industry zone set between two light-industrial areas. Banagher parked the electric car at a parking station near a convenience store and walked down to the nearby subway station. Thinking that Takuya might catch up to him if he kept letting himself get distracted, he left his stupid problems behind as his feet naturally quickened through the silent street.

Industrial 7 was one of the industrial space colonies Anaheim Electronics operated. Under the control of the Space Colonies Association, the management of facilities was completely controlled by Anaheim Electronics. Amongst the population of two million, more than half of them worked for Anaheim Electronics, or was directly related to someone who did. Of the remaining one million, half of them worked in enterprises related to Anaheim, or in underground companies, and those who were unrelated to Anaheim were mostly civil servants working with government administration, the police, or the fire department. The colony didn't belong to any Side, and it didn't have any form of self-government, so the Federation Army didn't maintain a military presence. This space colony was basically Anaheim Electronics' personal island.

After the One Year War, Anaheim Electronics began to recover and absorbed other, smaller companies, eventually becoming a large corporation that many people called the 'Spoon of the Space Army'. The company grew so large, that supermarkets, fast food chains, and most other companies in any given commercial district would all bear the logo of Anaheim Electronics. There were movies sponsored by Anaheim Electronics, sports teams sponsored by

Anaheim in away games, and people using AE credit cards to pay for all of these. Money would flow around within the corporation, forming a structure where the money was paid out, then taken back. However, none of it was ever forced, and it was all done such that the residents wouldn't notice anything. This was the reason why Anaheim Electronics had become the world's largest corporation. Banagher glanced at the posters outside the station, 80% of which were somehow related to the corporation, went through the turnstile, and onto the platform.

The whole of Industrial 7 was just like a factory. At all times there were people working. However, there was no real shift change, such as during morning peak hours. Therefore, on the subway, there was only a drunk, middle-aged man who had collapsed in his work clothes, and a woman who looked as if she worked in a night club, and whose thick make-up was coming off. She didn't notice Banagher get on the train as she looked emotionlessly out the window. The smell of old perfume inside the train car reminded one of the smell of a hometown long ago given up on. Banagher saw a double-wide seat and quickly sat down.

The three layers of doors closed, and the train jerked slightly before moving from the platform into the tunnels leading to the outside of the space colony. It was called the subway, but subways in the space colonies didn't run underground, but along rail tracks on the exposed outer walls of the space colony. In other words, the train was hanging on the tracks and transported outside the space colony—in outer space.

Soon after the train left the station, the air lock door at the end of the ramp was locked behind it. Then, the air lock door in front

opened, and the train entered the vacuum of outer space. The sound of both movement and air-flow disappeared in the train, and an ear-stuffing silence filled the car. The train went through the air lock and glided across outer wall of the space colony.

As there was no air resistance, only a minimal amount of force was be required to move the train at high speed along the track. In a space colony, this was one of the most efficient modes of transport. It was the fastest way to get to the dock, faster than taking a cable car from the bottom of the colony, or even riding the elevator up in an electric car. Banagher also preferred to look at outer space from the train's window, so this place had a sense of release other places couldn't provide.

There were people who didn't want to take the train for fear of motion sickness, though. To create a centrifugal force of 1g, the space colony had to make one rotation about every two minutes, which worked out to a rotational speed of more than 600 kilometers per hour. If it were to follow the movement of the rotation, the subway train would appear to continually move, and to a passenger, it would look like someone shaking the bottom of a toilet bowl full of stars at incredibly high speeds. Of course, as it was just a long rotation of more than 20 kilometers, it would merely look like the stars were constantly moving. However, if one weren't careful, the mind would feel dizzy upon returning to the inside of the space colony, and. In the worst cases, it would cause severe a psychological problem, called Coriolis Syndrome: a common environment illness amongst the first generation of space migrants. However, to Banagher ,who had been born and raised in the space colonies, looking out from the window into outer space was like looking at an exhibition, something that was merely a

little different from everyday life. Once outside the space colony, Banagher could clearly see the in-progress construction of Industrial 7.

Industrial 7 orbited in the shoal space at L1, between the Moon and Earth. It was shaped like a large oxygen tank, and the end undergoing construction was facing Earth. On the other side, the side that faced the moon, there was a covered settlement-building tool commonly known as “Wheels”. After construction was completed, the cylinder of the colony would be 30 kilometers long. Right now, though, only 18 kilometers were completed. In fact, Banagher remembered, there was a new plate arriving today.

The notice board at the dorm had a poster saying “On 7 April, at 1:00 PM, there will be a new plate extension which will cause inconvenience…” and so on. This meant that there would be new artificial land added. The cylinder of Industrial 7 would be extended by another six kilometers. The space colonies were floating amongst the large amount of rubbish from the last war. No matter how much it expanded, the world Banagher lived in would be that size.

As Banagher thought about this, as his mind thought of that “ disjointedness”, he saw something white flash past, outside the window.

ほんの一瞬、小指の先にも満たない大きさだったが、バナージには、白い残像を引いて行き過ぎる物体が人型であるように見えた。（本文より）

It wasn't a star. It let out several exhaust lights of blueish-white, going past in a diagonal manner and flying faster than the rotation of the space colony. It was only for a moment, and was far enough away that it looked only about the size of a small fingertip, but Banagher was sure that the afterimage looked human.

"A mobile suit…?"

It was completely different from a mini mobile suit, like the one Banagher used for work. It was a real mobile suit. It wasn't just a complete duplicate of a human being's dimensions, though. as Banagher saw a single horn which extended from the head. Industrial 7 didn't have a factory that could create mobile suits, so it couldn't be a new mobile suit field test. Was the army nearby?

For some reason, Banagher's pulse started to race, and his palms began to sweat. The uncanny resemblance to a white horse—no, the impressive lone horn made it look not like a mere white horse, but like a mystical beast from legend. What was it called though...

At that moment, the "disjointed" world became apparent, and it seemed that something previously unseen had appeared before Banagher. However, he could find no way to describe this. Banagher put his face to the window, eagerly looking for the white machine. The nightclub-styled woman sitting behind him wasn't moving, and the man in worker's clothing was still snoring loudly.

The train reached one end of the space colony ,and turned down a corner. The front end of the colony looked like a sealed,

round pressure tube. The train moved through the seal, and to the docking bay in the center. Banagher couldn't find the white mobile suit and sat back. Outside the windshield, one could see the immense docking bay linking to several large buildings near the commercial area, and the sheer weight of the sight would make anyone gasp for breath. However, Banagher no longer cared about it. He merely felt the intense white afterimage in his eyes start to fade away, as his heart started to beat wildly for some reason.

This was how everything began.

Part 4

The white machine moved past the rotating space colony and headed off in the opposite direction from the docking bay, towards the Moon.

Similar to those of the other space colonies, the outer walls of Industrial 7 were of a blueish-silver color. However, at the 18 kilometer point, facing the moon, the color changed to a tea-brown color. This was because the space colony building tool, the Wheel, was set on the end of the moon's side.

The Wheel was 10 kilometers long and 6.4 kilometers across, just like a normal space colony. From a distance, it looked like an Eastern teacup, and the part that covered the space colony looked like a pencil case. Its job was to build the outer wall of the space colony, and the plate block on the inside of the wall. As the name " Wheel" would indicate, the space colony was created out from the large cover. Once the outer wall was built and aligned properly, the Wheel would slide back the appropriate distace before

separating. The front end of the cover had a gate to move equipment, and a workers quarters. This meant that, even with the expansion work, the space colony could continue to operate without day-to-day life being affected.

Right now, Industrial 7 had the Wheel's equipment at the entrance, at the bottom of the "cup". This way, other machinery and equipment could be moved in through the large machine. The white mass went past the outer wall of the Wheel, and shortly reached the far end of moon side of the colony, and the large machine, the *Magallanica*, that was attached to it.

The *Magallanica* was about 6,500 meters long, and the long, thin center exposed the rotational residential area that was 1.6 kilometers long. The machine's unique shape earned it the moniker of "Snail". Both sides of the of the rotating residential area had factories sticking out, looking like little asteroids that were absorbing resources. The seemingly-biological appearance matched the *Magallanica*'s nickname well. On the back of its main body, there was a nuclear pulse engine. Due to the fact that it could navigate on its own, it could be said to be a giant spacesuit. Due to its ability to create, refine, and even build space colonies, it would be more appropriate to call the *Magallanica* a mobile factory with an engine. In fact, the *Magallanica* was classified as a space colony builder, and its dimensions were very different from those of a spaceship.

At the area of the Magallanica that was the head of the snail shape, there was an oval-shaped command center. The white machine slowed down in front of it, made a flip with the AMBAC system, flew along the arc of the windows, and went up. Several

unmanned cameras followed its path, taking shots of several of the machine's parts: the main thruster on the back of the machine, the overall image of straight and curved contours, and the complicated antenna that extended out from the forehead. These images were immediately analyzed and displayed on multiple screens in the command room, all in front of Cardeas Vist.

The dome-shaped command room was more than 70 meters across, and had a fan-shaped command system that gave the impression of the bridge of a docked ship combined with the control center of a military base. The inside walls of the dome-shaped space seemed to be filled with nothing but screens and windows. Displayed on the fan-shaped metal board in the middle was a control panel full of messages and switches. The *Magallanica* was a space colony builder meant to develop the area around Jupiter, and it was this opulent command room which bore the responsibility of a central brain. However, as it was now in Earth's vicinity, most of the control functions weren't used. Thus, only a fourth of the control seats were occupied, and the whole scene seemed somewhat relaxed.

However, every single one of the 20 control personnel looked rather serious. They were staring at the screens on the wall and recording the data there on the computers in their hands. The command room hummed with intensity, and it wasn't just because of the end of the overnight operation experiment. It was because they knew that the UC Project itself was about to end. Cardeas also felt this excitement as he sat in the central seat of the command room.

The Earth Federation had requested Anaheim Electronics to secretly carry out the UC Project, and that project would end with the completion of this white mobile suit. However, that would also be the beginning of Cardeas' plan.

The product of this UC Project, the RX-0 "Unicorn" mobile suit, would be born out of the darkness, where even the army and Anaheim wouldn't see, and would become the key to a journey that would break a hundred-year-old curse. The machine that bore the name of the beast of possibilities would bring release to the world or—

"RX-0, you are too close to the space colony! The train is moving ! What will happen if a passenger sees you?"

An operator, who also bore the secrecy of this job, roared into the microphone. Cardeas also felt nervous when he saw the Unicorn close in on the outer walls of the space colony, but a daring pilot was a reliable pilot.

"Today is his last time piloting the Unicorn," Cardeas said with a wry smile, "Forgive him."

"Yes, sir..." Even though he kept back his attitude, the operator still couldn't hide the emotions on his face as he looked at the screen. Even though he was a overly serious, he was still a good worker, and Cardeas' wry smile made this even more obvious. All the workers here, including the test pilots, were Anaheim Electronics employees involved in the UC Project. The Vist Foundation gave them a high salary in return for their silence and

aid to fulfil Cardeas' plan. Of course, not a single one of them was the kind of person who could be bought over with money, and all of them were outstanding technicians who hoped for the Unicorn to be completed successfully.

Right now, the only person in the room who wasn't a member of Anaheim Electronics was probably Gael Chan, who was standing beside Cardeas. He was Cardeas' secretary and bodyguard. Gael, who, like Cardeas, had also been in the military, joked, "That's just what you'd expect an ex-pilot to say." He was in charge of maintaining the secrecy of this project, and now, he should be reviewing the security at the secret stronghold in *Magallanica*.

Gael had once been involved in an underground society, so he knew of the dealings within the army and the police. If there was a need for it, he would do a dirty job without hesitation. Gael had a bitter look on his face, which made Cardeas feel that he had something to say. He whispered, "What is the matter?"

"We just made contact with our allies on Luna II," Gael whispered back, "A Londo Bell ship engaged the Sleeves, lost three mobile suits, and let them get away."

Londo Bell was an independent mobile squadron of the Earth Federation, and didn't have a designated control area. It was a brigade that dealt with things once there was something to deal with. The command system was obviously different from that of a normal squadron, so it was more like an external organization, than part of the army.

And Londo Bell set an ambush around the shoal space region and fought with the Sleeves. To Cardeas, who had something important to complete, he couldn't just leave this alone.

“So news was leaked. Has Londo Bell take any more action?”

“We've tried looking into news on Londenion, but there's nothing yet. The commander's a really upright person.”

“He's called Bright Noa, right? I saw him before on a television interview or something like that. Such a man...”

“RX-0 has passed its final phase. All objectives complete.” The voice of the operator rang out, and Cardeas looked back to the front.

“Good work. The mental response to the G-force is within expectations.”

“Pilot's lifesigns all all normal.”

The sounds of reports continued to echo through the room, and behind Cardeas, Gael went quiet and seemed to back away. "Has it arrived?" Cardeas asked as he rubbed his eyes, and looked at the screen to confirm that the white machine had already entered the planned return trajectory.

“Everyone, please swear this together with me,” Cardeas said into the microphone on the control panel, “The activation

experiment of the RX-0 has successfully completed. Once it returns , we are going to remove the test OS, seal the NT-D, and activate the Laplace system."

The air rumbled a little, and soon, the command room was filled with an urgent silence. As the workers floated in front of the screen in zero gravity, they were all grabbing their things and looking at the chairman with nervous expressions.

"I'm grateful to everyone for taking part in this. The UC Project will never see the light of day, your accomplishments here will not be passed down through the generations. However, I would like to guarantee to everyone that here, where history will be made, the Unicorn will play an important role. Before that day, however, I hope that everyone remains silent about this and forgets everything you have heard here. The Vist Foundation will use its name and influence to ensure all of your safety. That is all."

The "safety" that had just been guaranteed meant that all the people here would be watched by the Foundation. All their relationships and communication records would be thoroughly examined. It was, after all, unknown just how much the workers knew. Gael indicated with his eyes for everyone to applaud, and after a slightly awkward applause, Cardeas put down the microphone.

Now, all the preparations were complete. The Unicorn would be sealed and handed to the recipient. If the recipient had the necessary element within themselves, the Unicorn would approach them, carry them, and lead them to Laplace's Box.

After that, it was impossible to predict what would happen. If the recipient didn't have the needed element, the seal of the Unicorn will not be broken—no, there was a bigger problem. There was no proof to indicate a person with the necessary qualities even existed. No matter how much he planned, there was no guarantee that the plan would work. Cardeas' conclusion, therefore, was not to think about it. He turned around and looked at Gael.

“Proceed according to plan,” Cardeas said, “Continue to track Londo Bell's movements. If we can't track the commander, we can still know where the fleets are going if we follow their supply lines .”

“Understood... but, aren't you going to reconsider?”

Grabbing onto the handle of the chair, Gael lowered his upper body and whispered to Cardeas. Cardeas looked at Gael's face.

“They not related to the Federation, but the Sleeves are still a dangerous organization. There's no need for the head of the Vist Foundation to personally meet them.”

On seeing Gael's expression, which was practically screaming “ Think about your age!”, Cardeas couldn't help but grimace inwardly. Even if this wasn't something directly related to the Foundation, Cardeas didn't want to hand it over to other people. After all, if there was really someone who fit the plan’s requirements, Cardeas wanted to see what kind of person they were.

"If you really think that, then just do your work properly and safely, and try to prevent trouble here in Industrial 7," Cardeas said in a half-joking manner, "Besides, I'm the chairman of a school here."

As he spoke, he used the computer beside him to open the introductory page of Anaheim Electronics Industrial College. Gael didn't smile as he used his eyes to ask "Is this really alright?", but left the command room quietly. On seeing Gaelfloat down the corridor, Cardeas looked back at the screen displaying the logo of Anaheim Electronics and a photo of the school.

After keying in the password that indicated he was the chairman, Cardeas looked through the list of student names. A list that was never to be released to the public. As Cardeas scrolled through the alphabetical list of five thousand students, he stopped a certain photo on the screen, and then sighed in what seemed a habitual manner.

Now that he thought about it, he really shouldn't be using this place to make deals. However, there was no better place to hide from the eyes of both the client and the developer, and there was no better place to install the Laplace System in the Unicorn. The industrial space colony builder *Magallanica*, jointly owned by Vist Foundation and Anaheim Electronics, symbolized a good inseparable location that could fool the army and Anaheim. A secret garden to readjust the Unicorn. Cardeas silently watched as the screen showed an enlarged profile of the student.

Banagher Links. Currently of the Technical Resource development branch. 16 years old. As Cardeas looked at the birthday and the listed personal particulars, he again sighed, and looked at the boyish face that seemed to represent his youth.

Part 5

The dock of a space colony was called a docking bay, mostly as a holdover from when space development was still under way. In that age, when humanity finally found a way to send space stations into low orbit above Earth, the ships that went to and fro were just docking with the space stations. The size of the stopping point wasn't large enough to be called a “bay”. There were also quite a few cases of space stations being linked to each other. Regardless of terminology though, the early space constructions were just relay platforms.

Right now, the docking bay at the front end of the space colony had seven space docks of different sizes inside its cylindrical shell, and a spaceship at the dock would merely be stopped in zero gravity, waiting for the immigration check and other bureaucratic procedures. The zero gravity industrial area of Industrial 7 was linked to the docking bay, so there was a ring-shaped construct that reached out from the space colony. Including the cylindrical docking bay, the entire assembly was over 3.5 kilometers long. All of the factories in the colony had a dock for transport ships to dock , so there weren't just ten or twenty ships that came in and went. There were so many of them it was like fireflies surrounding a high pressure bottle.

4:15 AM. The *Garencieres* became one of those fireflies as it gradually approached the brand-new docking bay of Industrial 7. The space colony was only half complete and still new, and the platform showed a dim glow. Even more eye-catching, though, was the light reflected from the solar panels. The four rows of five kilometer-long rectangular solar panels were aligned beside the space colony, and their main surface was always facing the sun. The electricity obtained from the solar panels was sent to the space colony via microwaves. To the isolated environment of the space colony of Industrial 7, this was a must.

Of course, it was very easy to get electromagnetic interference when the electricity was being transferred, so the solar panel wouldn't be in a path where ships docked. Despite that, the *Garencieres* grazed by the solar panels and reduced its velocity relative to Industrial 7. As the ship past a piece of solar panel reflecting sunlight, the hatch opened, releasing a mobile suit from the hangar.

There was a dark green body and a single, glowing pink eye. This was an AMS-129 "Geara Zulu", the mobile suit that made up most of the Sleeves' fighting forces. It looked like a cross between a knight from the Middle Ages, and an early 20th Century soldier wearing a helmet and a gas mask. As it moved past the solar panel , the mobile suit dropped off the *Garencieres*, using the shield on its right shoulder to reflect sunlight, and soon began to let out bursts of thrust. Next to the large solar panel, the 20 meter-tall, human-shaped machine was like dust. Once it slipped through a gap behind the structure of the solar panel, it was as good as invisible.

Not even 10 seconds had passed from the time the Geara Zulu left the *Garencieres* until it disappeared behind the solar panel. Even though the ship's trajectory had been cleared, this region of space still had lots of debris around, and the space traffic control couldn't possibly notice a single ship's mysterious actions. Even if there were someone serious enough to take out a pair of binoculars and look, the light reflected off the solar panel would conceal everything. Marida Cruz looked back at the solar panel, then back at the ship's bridge.

Located on the left and right sides of the bridge were the helmsman's station, and the navigational station, respectively. In the back, and slightly elevated over the rest of the bridge, was the captain's seat. The bridge of the *Garencieres* was full with just those three things, and those who didn't have a position here couldn't stay for long without getting uncomfortable. However, since the ceiling still had a definite height, there weren't much problems when under zero gravity. In zero gravity, everyone on board could squeeze into the three-dimensional space the bridge provided.

"This will take a while," the captain, Suberoa Zinnerman, bellowed to the microphone, "But it'll be over before the day is out . Just bear with it."

The old captain's hat, brown leather coat, and rough stubble of moustache made him look like the stereotypical captain of an old trading ship. However, his eyes were sharp.

<Yes, Captain.>

The acknowledgment that came back through the wireless communicator couldn't hide its anxiety.

The one who responded was Savoir, the pilot of the Geara Zulu. He would be hidden under the solar panel for a whole day to watch the outside of Industrial 7. They hadn't let the enemy know about the deal, but since they had been ambushed by the Federation, they couldn't trust in the kind intentions of the other party. If they were closely inspected once they entered the dock, Savoir's Geara Zulu would wreck havoc.

If that were the case, not only would Marida sortie in her Kshatriya, but the other Geara Zulu would launch too, piloted by Gilboa Sant. Right now, he was in the navigation seat, busily explaining to the control officer why they were slightly off course. Gilboa was 30 years old, with a friendly and approachable face. He had pure black skin that was rare to see nowadays, and was the father of three children. In the helmsman's seat on the other side of the bridge was the 27 year old Flaste Schole. Compared to Gilboa, Flaste gave off a cold and aloof vibe. Though he looked rather unapproachable, he was really a good big brother-type who took care of others. All the other members of the crew trusted him. He was a long-time acquaintance of Zinnerman, and the number two man on board, supporting the captain from behind.

The entire compliment of the *Garencieres* was 33 people, including the mobile suit team and the crew of the ship itself. Amongst the Sleeves which the Earth Federation had declared " Terrorists who appear from nowhere, then disappear", they could be said to be a specialized unit. With Captain Zinnerman leading

them, the entire crew were disguised as members of a trading ship, so they weren't as rigidly structured as a military organization. The main forces of the Sleeves seemed to view them as radicals too , so it was like Zinnerman was leading an independent group, or an underground organization carrying out a mission. In fact, they had received this mission precisely because of this nature. Because of the recent ambush by the Federation Navy, however, the ship had an atmosphere of not quite knowing how to deal with this mission.

They were headed to Industrial 7 to collect Laplace's Box, which the Vist Foundation claimed it would provide. At first glance, this was a mission that anyone could do. A mission that even a delivery company could do. The only strange thing about the whole affair was that no one knew what Laplace's Box actually was.

"We've bypassed the inspection completely," Gilboa said worriedly once he had ended the conversation with the traffic control officer, "It seems that the Harbor Authority was notified too, so we can dock without an investigation…. I don't understand ."

Marida looked over at him, and through the window in front of him she could see the guiding lights leading to a thumb-sized space gate.

"The thing we're after is in the port on the other side of the colony, right?" Gilboa asked, "Why won't they let us go there? Since it's connected to the colony builder, wouldn't it be easier to carry out the deal if we weren't allowed into the colony itself?"

"That colony builder is said to be Vist Foundation property," Flaste responded, "Odds are, they don't want us getting too close."

Industrial 7 had only opened the port on the Earth side of the colony, and the port on the moon side was covered by the colony builder. The builder itself was a large installation that could purify and use the space dust in the debris field to make parts for new space colonies. Not just the the employees of the builder, but even the people living inside the space colony were said have their movements restricted. While it was no one knew whether the Laplace's Box of rumor was real, this colony builder was still a good place to carry out a secret deal. However, for some reason, the Vist Foundation wouldn't let them go directly to the colony builder.

"They're being cautious", said Zinnerman as he drank from a can of coffee, "We are the dreaded, illegal Sleeves after all."

Zinnerman's self-moking tone washed away the doubts of his subordinates and reminded everyone that they were in danger. Despite that reminder, though, Flaste continued on, a rare feat for him.

"So, what is this "Laplace's Box" thing, anyway? You should probably tell us, right?"

That was the question that went straight to the core of the issue. Gilboa looked back at Zinnerman in the Captain's seat. Zinnerman shrugged.

"I don't know. Maybe it's some huge, shocking treasure."

"It's well-hidden, but the Vist Foundation is just one huge organization, and it's deepin bed with the government and Anaheim Electronics," said Gilboa, "The colony builder is their main base, right? Those guys who deal with the Federation government would actually offer us a treasure? I just don't understand what's going on here."

This was precisely what everyone on the *Garencieres* was thinking, but Zinnerman just continued to look aloof. He answered , "This is information we got from Full Frontal, so we can trust that it's at least accurate." He looked at Marida, who just so happened to look back at him.

"There is definitely something wrong with this situation, what with that ambush and all," Zinnerman said, "Don't let your guard down."

Marida nodded at this warning, and looked out of the window. Luckily, the port official's ship was closing in, and Flaste and Gilboa started speaking into the radio, and the conversation ended . Marida looked at the numerous lights and readouts, checking that everything was normal.

At this point, there were three things they knew. First, they would be provided with the Box for free, provided they followed the instructions of Vist Foundation. Second, the item was large, so it had to be transported via cargo ship. Because of this, they had only two Geara Zulu even though they could normally hold three. On the other hand, the fact that they only took one fewer mobile suit showed that Zinnerman was being cautious on this mission.

However, the most important point was the third one. This thing called Laplace's Box had the ability to overturn the world—shake the Earth Federation to its core and radically alter the status quo—it could be some scandal in the current administration, or an ultimate weapon that could bring about an overwhelming military victory. It was important though, otherwise headquarters wouldn't have agreed to the Vist Foundation's invitation. Right now, the Sleeves were such that even if it was only a trace of hope, they had to grab it.

All that aside, no matter what was inside Laplace's Box, Marida's mission was to protect her master and follow his orders. That would never change. If the box really existed, they would bring it back. If it was a trap, she would break through it. No matter how much of a sacrifice she had to make, she wouldn't hesitate in the slightest.

Marida looked out again at Industrial 7. The isolated space colony, and the secret locked inside it, was floating amidst the stone and metal debris. The *Garancieres* followed the guiding lights and entered the docking bay. As the ship was about to be assigned to a space gate, Marida saw numerous small objects flying past into outer space. She consciously checked the appearance and number of objects, checking to see if they were dangerous.

They were cylindrical objects, with short legs and arms for work , and bubble-shaped canopies covering a pilot. These human-shaped machines were about as tall as two humans. Marida determined they were mobile suits used for short-range work around the port.

A total of eight mobile suits flew by, perhaps here to clean the runway, then, another dozen of the miniature mobile suits past the *Garancieres* . As he looked at the squad of three-meter-tall mobile suits, Gilboa said, "Those are Bubbo's company machines."

"Junk Collectors?"

"Yeah. Lots of space colonies opened up franchises. They probably came here because of Anaheim's outsourcing project. It looked like good work, and thanks to the One Year War, there's enough junk to last hundreds of years."

Gilboa sounded somewhat heavy-hearted, perhaps feeling that he was in the middle of creating even more junk. Flaste didn't respond to him, and Marida just looked at the mini mobile suits floating in vacuum.

As they let out a thruster boost, the mini mobile suits started to move toward the space dust in orbit. They would cut down those things that were too big to carry back. To them, junk was just junk; just a commodity to reclaim in order to decide who gets more back . *"There's a life like that then,"* Marida thought. A life where she wouldn't take other people's lives or have her life taken. After thinking about her life in one year, ten years, or even longer, a life to fight for tomorrow would…

"The enemies shot down today may one day be reclaimed?" Marida looked at the lights that didn't involve her and thought.

Part 6

The girl moved through the ship that brought her here. She went through three compartments, and arrived at the central bay.

The docking had begun, and a variable-sized communicator that looked something like a harmonica was connected to the bridge and air lock of the *Garencieres*. As she looked through the window and saw that the workers inside the ship were busy, the girl cautiously left the room.

She closed the visor on her spacesuit's helmet. The helmet wasn't that important when there was air, but the girl was mainly using it to hide her face. Most of the port workers would be wearing spacesuits, and if she was lucky, she could sneak through. The girl held a mobile handle and moved through the narrow corridor, reached the hatch of the ship, and decisively opened the air lock.

The wind caused by the difference in air pressure between the outside of the ship and the inside remained unheard, thanks to the sound of metal colliding, the sound of the exhaust of an overhead crane, and an audio broadcast by the dockmaster. The center dock was a large space that was almost 500 meters across, and the floor and the ceiling—though it was meaningless to call them that when there wasn't any gravity—had four canes each. Each of those cranes were attached to trading ships like the *Garencieres*. The girl went through the air lock, let her body float towards the floor twenty meters away. Before the magnetic boots of the spacesuit touched the ground, the girl took out a cable gun from her belt and fired at the side of a crane.

The magnet on the end of the cable stuck to the crane. The girl squeezed the trigger again, and the cable began coiling, carrying

the girl to the magnet. Tools like this were really important when working in zero gravity.

After the cable finished coiling, the magnet disengaged from the crane. Aiming at another point, she fired the cable again. Like this, the girl moved towards the exit of the dock. On her way to the exit, she past the crew of the *Garencieres*, but since everyone was busy dealing with the docking, and she had her spacesuit and visor on, no one recognized her. The girl reached the exit without anyone noticing, and then used a mobile handle to move on. The mobile handle installed on the wall and handrail went faster the tighter it was gripped, and a strong squeeze sent the girl towards the industrial area.

The ships that had already cleared inspection were docked at this port. Thus, it wasn't hard to leave, and there should be no problems if the industrial port wasn't actively operating. The problem was how to reach the colony builder on the other side of the space colony. As the girl remembered the map of Industrial 7 she had memorized, she slipped among a group of workers and entered the main terminal.

The girl had a plan. At the center core of Industrial 7, there was an artificial sun. This installation reached out to both sides of the colony, and created the illusion of night and day. In the old century's manner of speech, it was something like an elaborate play.

The artificial sun had a walkway for inspection that connected to both ends of the space colony. Naturally, this wasn't a place anyone would normally go. And since the artificial sun gave off

lots of heat, the pathway couldn't be used in the day. However, if the girl used that walkway, she wouldn't have to enter the space colony proper, and could quickly reach the other side. There was a chance that she could get near the colony builder, usually restricted to public access, and find a chance to sneak in.

5:50 AM. The girl checked her watch to make sure there was still time until daylight, and took off her spacesuit helmet. She pulled her short brown hair out of the suit, and floated into a nearby restroom.

Now that she was out of the busy part of the port, it would be too conspicuous to wear a spacesuit. She entered the restroom stall that had a toilet bowl for especially for use in zero gravity, took off her spacesuit, and put on dark blue jeans and a white blouse, then left the restroom. She ignored the whistling worker who passed by her as she put on a jacket that was as fluffy as a shawl, then grabbed a mobile handle and moving to the exit of the tower. As it was probably not time for a shift change, there weren't many people at the exit.

"I have to get to the colony builder before Zinnerman and Marida get there and meet the person I need to talk to," The girl thought as she moved out of the terminal building.

Part 7

A while back, Banagher was in the same Terminal Building, at the office of Bubbo's Company, facing the Chief of the Management Section.

"So I can't sortie today?"

"That's the instructions of the superiors. A trading ship's about to enter at the last minute, so I had to send a crane out first…I asked the previous shift to handle the rest, and they went off."

While the superiors ask for increase in efficiency, the subordinates ask for improvement in working environment, and the Chief of Management had to explain that the blame wasn't on him. Right now, the large amount of space dust caused lots of social problems, and the Bubbo Company showed marked improvement in growth. However, most people viewed them as merely junk collectors who overturned things, and there's a rather bleak feeling about this. Even if they changed their title for 'Junk Collector' to 'Resource Collector', the understanding of society would not change. At this operation base of <<Industrial 7>> and everyone inside, including the Chief had a rather lonely feeling.

It was really no surprise that Bubbo Company would lend out cranes to a ship that just arrived, but to Banagher who came here to work part-time, it wasn't worth being so happy about. The morning shift squad had already left, so those who were working today flew off. There was no latest mini mobile suits to use, and everything was just a waste of time. Banagher really wanted to grumble 'I finally became the first one here…' or something like that.

"Sorry, I'll add some extra money for your overtime fee next time."

The bespectacled Chief smiled and seemed to be busy managing the delayed trip. He wasn't hiding the fact that he didn't have the time to deal with part-time workers as he went into the office to get the call. The two workers who were working night shift were also lowering their heads and staring at their screens. Seeing them like this, Banagher didn't have the energy to talk more as he left the office that had the smell of plastic. The word ' Disjointed' went through his mind again.

Banagher let Haro exit onto the corridor first, kicked against the wall that had footprints all over it, and let his body float towards the corridor window that could look at the central port. The number 4 crane Bubbo Company used was parked at a ship he had no impression on. It was an old-styled Vertical Take-off and Landing (VTOL) Craft. The ship that was obviously stained had the logo 'RIbakoona Trading' on it and the ship's name << Garencieres>>.

"The name's rather delicate…"

As he muttered this a little grudgingly, he found that Takuya was coming in from the other end of the corridor. Takuya let go of the handle that was moving at the fastest speed possible before his body landed on the cushion on the wall due to inertia. The first thing he spoke was: "Banagher, you bastard…!" And Banagher silently pointed to the office's entrance.

Takuya was also stunned as he then walked into the office, and soon appeared on the corridor after 1 minute. He looked like he didn't know what was going on, but he chuckled on seeing

Banagher, and even said (That's karma, karma.) Even Haro was flapping its ear disks and crying 'Retribution, retribution'. Banagher carried Haro and left the corridor.

There was still three hours until vocational lessons began, and Banagher and Takuya didn't want to head back to the hostel to sleep. Thus, they went to the cafeteria in the industrial area. The cafeteria that was facing the inside of the space colony was also a rest area that functioned as an observatory post, so they could still take a little nap at this time.

In this <<Industrial 7>> space colony that was almost completely covered with factories, the zero gravity industrial area that was linked to the docking bay was the largest production base . There were all sorts of production lines, from metal, refining, heating to assembly, and it included a production work that made use of the zero gravity environment. This place produces everything related to industrial needs, from the screws used on a train to the <<gundanrium alloy>>.

To the industrial area that works for 3 shifts, 24 hours a day, no matter whether it was midnight or morning, it was just a unit of time. Once they entered the unloading area that was full of air, they could hear the sounds of mini mobile suits moving about, hoots and controllers shouting, and also the sounds of metal colliding with each other. Soon, they heard the voices of the operator shouting :"DAMN BRATS! WEAR A HELMET HERE!" Banagher and Takuya shouted, "Sorry!" but didn't slow down as they grabbed hard onto the mobile handle and continued to head to the unloading area that would lead to the cafeteria.

On the way, Banagher mentioned to Takuya about how he saw a white mobile suit in the subway train. Takuya, who was studying mobile suits and aimed to be a test pilot, was already familiar with military affairs such that he could be said to be a fanatic of it. Banagher thought that his facial expression would change on hearing a new mobile suit, but Takuya's reaction was unexpectedly cold.

"The war with Zeon is over. The Federation finally started with reprogramming. Even if a new mobile suit is developed, it would just be a minor modification to a <<GM>>."

"But that machine was completely white and had a single horn on it. It really looked special. Since it's a reprogrammed one, it's not weird to see a new mobile suit developed, right?"

"Fool, that's something that can only happen during war. Why would they allocate some of the budget to develop a new mobile suit if there's no imaginary enemy."

That sounded logical. "Is that so…" "You really don't know anything." On hearing such a response, Banagher felt like he may want to find a hole to hide in.

No matter what aspect it is, someone who works hard on one thing would have the keen eyesight of observing the world from that perspective, and Banagher felt a little short and behind others for not being able to have it. It wasn't too bad if it was an ordinary high school student, but someone studying this 'one-way trip' at Anaheim Electronics would feel really guilty.

"It's great that you had a goal."

Thus, Banagher suddenly raised this issue. Takuya looked somewhat surprised and gave a wry look "What are you saying?"

"Aren't you planning to go develop the Jupiter zone?"

"That's true…"

However, Banagher was different from Takuya. He merely chose one subject out of many when he transferred into Anaheim Electronics Institute College, and didn't really have a particular insistence. Banagher merely wanted to see Jupiter and was moved by the term trail blazer, but he lost all enthusiasm when he thought of how he had to study engineering and mathematics. No, it's not that he found studying hard, but that he found himself ' disjointed' when he was mixed together with a group a really passionate volunteers.

Thinking about this, the doubts Banagher often had would appear in his mind, whether he should be here? He searched through the layers of his memories as to why he was here. His mother died, and on the night of the funeral, a group of men in suits appeared and said, "We're hired by your father." And told him that his life will be assured in the future. After that, what he got was a transfer application to Anaheim Electronics Institute College—

They never explained what kind of person his father was, and only said that one day, he would meet him personally. Banagher himself didn't want to ask too much. It wasn't really much of an

interest to him, but as both mother and son relied on each other for more than 10 years, anyone would be troubled about a father who suddenly appeared, and no matter what the reason was, Banagher didn't want to recognize a man who wouldn't even come to his mother's funeral. At the same time, he felt that if he opened himself too much, he would be betraying his mother.

His mother was a kind and strong-willed person who raised Banagher alone and made Banagher forget that he needed a father. Though the ever-changing jobs and residences caused Banagher to end up transferring schools without having time to make friends, it wasn't his mother's fault. Banagher would always remember how on Christmas night at the age of 5, that this Haro was sent over without warning.

His mother said that it was a present from Santa Claus, but Banagher knew that it was a present sent over by his father. After that, his mother would keep moving houses like she was running away from disaster, perhaps to get away from his father. And his mother would be unhappy if he asked. Thus, Banagher knew before the age of ten that this was a question he couldn't ask.

"He's really a strong-willed person. You can be proud to be his son. But I know that his strength won't bring happiness to us mother and son, so mom can only bring you away from that person…"

His mother would only talk about this when his father was mentioned. Whenever his mother asked "Do you understand?" Banagher could only pretend to understand and nod his head. Both mother and son stayed in an old space colony at <<Side 1>>,

an old residential area near the slums. Banagher grew up watching his mother who shouldn't be living in such a place, felt that he shouldn't cause too much trouble for his mother, and started to feel troubled by the 'disjointed' feeling in him.

It's especially because of that unknown reason that he started to feel 'disjointed' ever since he first had his memories. It was different from feeling out of place. It felt like there was a place he should really be at, but that his mind and body was being separated from that place. This baseless feeling still didn't disappear even after he accepted the invitation of this father of his that he never met before and stayed in <<Industrial 7>>. The naïve expectation that this 'disjointed' feeling would disappear the moment he came here was just a rhapsody of his own youth. Banagher could calmly analyze this aspect of himself in hindsight.

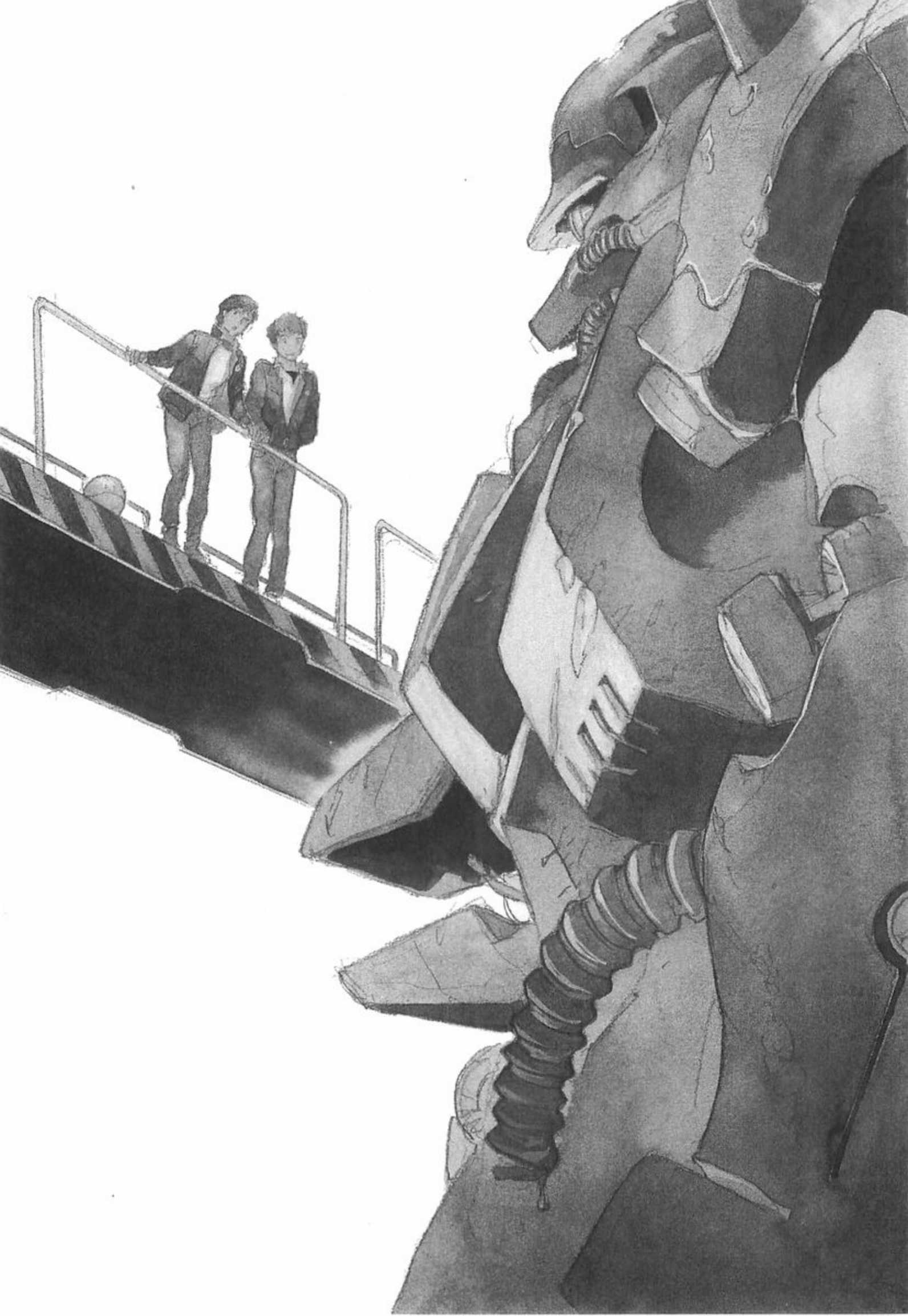
He thought that if he put on the uniform of Anaheim Electronics and thought of becoming a member of this large corporation, he could forget all about this. However, after 8 months of hostel life, what he got was only an ordinary license and a mini mobile suit license. In the days that never changed, where things never really happened, the 'disjointed' feeling started to grow. Right now, he still didn't know his father's true identity, and neither did he try to know as he was already having a hard time handling the future that was becoming smaller.

Why did I come here? Why do I feel that I am looking forward to this 'Disjointed' feeling being filled up? As he carried the Haro that he took care of all this time, Banagher pondered. *Was it that I want to*

meet my father? To see where I come from? But even if we meet, nothing will change. Even if I know my origins, I can't be assured that there will be where I will go…

His thoughts just continued to beat around like this as they went from the unloading bay to the cargo area. Takuya, who was walking in front, shouted excitedly, "Wow, that's a huge find!" and Banagher lifted his head up.

At a corner of the large cargo area, there were the remains of a mobile suit. It's unknown whether it was the Bubbo Company or other 'Junk Collector' company who took it in. The parts below the knees were severed, and those parts under the right shoulder were gone. However, the dark green body and the head with the one eye were still intact, and it was still easy to identify what the damaged thing was. This was really a great find, and even Banagher felt this way. Almost all the remains of space colonies or mobile suits were taken back, and as mainstream mobile suits became mini ones that were only able to pull scraps, it's really rare to see such a relatively intact scrap. It's unknown who found it, but the person who found it can earn half a year's worth of salary with this. Banagher and Takuya let go of the hand and floated towards the remains.



"Is that a <<Zaku>>?"

As he reached the deck where he could look down at the remains, Banagher grabbed onto the handrail and asked Takuya. That used to be the main fighting force of the Republic of Zeon, the name of the line of machines and also the mother of all mobile suits. No matter whether it was the green frame that had lots of spikes on the left shoulder armor, Banagher really couldn't think of any other machine that had these characteristics. However, Takuya answered: "Idiot, that's not it."

"That's the <<Geara Doga>>, a machine used during 'Char's Counterattack'."

"Never heard of it. I'm not that crazy about machines."

"This is created by Anaheim! Remember that."

Takuya used his finger to point at the temple, and Banagher just stared at the remains of the mobile suit. The machine that obviously had burned scars had workers all around using their handheld notebooks to enter data into. It's unknown whether they were trying to diagnose the selling price of the machine or how to distribute this once they decide to split this out. The one eye and the visor glass were broken, but the power source that was severed off was leaking oil, making one wonder if the reactor could still work. The still-human appearance that remained made one wonder that it may be a remain that could move once someone adjust it.

Maybe the pilot was able to get out in time? Banagher had this idea as he turned his eyes to the cockpit at the abdomen, but gasped as he found that he was wrong. The armor plate that was protecting the cockpit was twisted by the heat, opening a hole that was 1m long. It looked like a beam weapon shot through it, burning through the cocking, leaving a laser bullet hole and vaporizing the pilot. It looked just like a black hole that led to an endless darkness . That was the action of humans who made the hole, one that was unrelated to them, called war. It was deep and black, looking like it was about to absorb someone into it—

"…The war's over. There won't be any new frames now."

Takuya swallowed his saliva and mentioned what they were talking about just now. The side of his face seemed to be a little white.

"There aren't any news on terrorism recently."

"There's still some remnants of Zeon, but the scale's not large enough to form an army. The Defense Ministry wrote in black and white that 'We're cleaning up after the war on Zeon'."

"The space colony I was staying on once had a freelance transporter, but he said something about space residents living independently, and I didn't feel anything much after hearing it."

Side 3, which was on the back of the Moon, was self-proclaimed the Republic of Zeon that declared its independence from the Earth Federation and triggered what's called the One Year War. Banagher understood this as well. The dark wasteland region

where <<Industrial 7>> was where the remains of the initial battle both sides had, the 'Battle of Loum'. Banagher himself was born under this offensive age where half the population was wiped out—what sociologists call babies born after the war. During the 16 years of war, the so-called remnants of Zeon continued to launch conflicts one after another, creating terrorist attacks on a grand scale. However, these were another thing entirely to Banagher and the rest, just information taught through televised news and textbooks. No matter whether it was the war or the independent movements of the space residents, it was nothing different from fiction to them.

However, the dark bullet hole in front of them showed them that all these were real. It caused them to realize that people really died from this and reprimanded them of their lazy lifestyles. They talked to each other in perfect unison and left this place. The image of war that suddenly appeared in front of them wasn't so easily erased, and that deep and dark hole that led to emptiness shot through Banagher's heart.

The cafeteria that was facing the inside of the space colony had one wall that was completely made of glass, and they could see the streets on the inside of the wall from the center of the cylinder. It was 5.20am, and the artificial sun that goes through the entire inside of the colony wasn't activated as there seemed to be a thin carpet of light seen inside the wall of the colony from 3,000m height.

In another 10 minutes, the artificial sun would declare the start of the day, and the vast amount of light and heat would bring about morning to <<Industrial 7>>. At that moment, the windows

of the cafeteria would have a light filter on to reduce the shine the artificial sun would release at close range. However, there was no need to cover it for now. The artificial sun outside the window that lead to the other side of the space colony was still in darkness. There were few people who were in the cafeteria at this point, and Banagher and Takuya were holding onto their own trays as they sat beside the window.

They were discussing about what to do with the report they have to hand in a month later, just before summer vacation began, how the old hag in physics lesson would mess them up, and talked around before Takuya started yawning. After putting the empty soup pipe onto the tray, he said "I'm going to sleep" and used the zero gravity environment to put his legs about. Banagher was trained by his mother strictly and couldn't be as rash as he was. However, he did feel that he was trying his best to get along with his surroundings and let himself loose already.

"Get some sleep, man. Micott's going to have a party at her house tonight."

Takuya closed his eyes as he said that. Banagher answered back : "Really?" But didn't sound very interested.

"Our technical school has too many people with no charm, but her school has quite a lot of good girls there. This is a good chance to get to know them. Better save our energy here, or else it'll be sad if we're still single once it's summer."

"Aren't you going back to your old home? Even if you have a girlfriend here…"

"Don't say that. I do go to the <<Francesca Colony>> with my family to do manual labor. Bringing my younger siblings out to fish in the day, barbequing at night with relatives; I can be so happy that I could cry. How can I hang on without a girlfriend waiting for me?"

"Don't go then."

"I can't do that. That's the bond of family…"

Takuya suddenly shut up and opened an eye before asking: " What are you going to do during summer vacation?" Banagher could only shrug at this concern that bothered him "Who knows."

"I don't have any relatives when I go back home, and I shifted. I guess the most I can do is to stay here and continue to work and earn money, and that I can earn my school fees before my sponsor changes his mind."

"Haven't you heard anything from your dad?"

"Un. Well, I don't know what I should do if there really was news."

"Fu-n…that's really hard to understand. Calling you here and not coming to see you."

Takuya felt that this was the only way he could show concern as an outsider and didn't mention this again. He diverted the topic and said "Then you should take advantage of tonight. There's only one summer when you're 16 years old."

"Un…", Banagher merely answered methodically as he continued to look outside the dark window.

However, it wasn't that he wasn't interested. Like others, Banagher went through romantic relationships and breakups, and he did have a few girlfriends at his hometown. However, what seemed to be a happy thing to them wasn't a happy thing to Banagher himself. Also, he never actually got on well with them, and was always seen through. Thus, the relationship would never last long. Girls in their youth really can't stand creatures like insincere men, and anything more didn't exist.

No. it was just because he never really had a real romantic relationship. Maybe things would change if he found a good partner. Maybe tonight's party may solve this. Banagher forced himself to think this way. This may be an encounter that could clear all the 'disjointed' feeling he had with the world and enchant him; an encounter that would make this Industrial space colony look rose colored; an encounter that could land him at where he lived. He would become a member who would walk in and out of a factory, covered with sweat and oil, and have a drink on the way home from work as an occasional luxury—an encounter that could allow him to accept this life.

Right outside the windows, the streets lights before dawn broke . The lights on the highway were showing a spiral shape, and what looked like lights from night delivery lorries were gliding silently. In another 2 hours, most of the people would get up and rush to their respective workplaces. The people who were waiting at the bus stops for buses will form crowds, and the subway trains that

were filled with workers changing shifts will move between the streets inside the wall and the industrial area. Today, that's just like yesterday and may be like tomorrow, continued to operate like a conveyor belt.

"Will we become part of this once we graduate…"

Feeling that intense 'disjointed' feeling again, Banagher muttered. Takuya didn't answer back, and as Banagher looked at him, he found that the body that was almost asleep was floating up from the table. As he grabbed Takuya's shoulders and pressed him back onto the chair like magic tape, Banagher saw 'that thing' outside the window.

At the base that's 100m above the cafeteria, at the pillar of the artificial sun that was reached out to the opposite side of the space colony—there was a warning light flashing. There was something floating as it crossed near the large pillar in the darkness. He first thought that it was junk. It's obvious for junk to be stuck near the sun after being taken away by an artificial convection when the space colony's being built in the opposite direction. However, the ' object' that was so small that it would disappear into the darkness, and that it was moving on its own. It seemed to be frantically flailing its limbs and moving its body to control its body as it flew with the wind.

He consciously let his body float near the window and grabbed Haro's fluttering ears in the air from underneath the table. Banagher looked at that 'object' that was lit up by the weak warning light. That's right, there was someone. Someone was floating near the artificial sun. it was 1km away, but Banagher

could see—or rather, feel that the person who was floating had a cape-shaped coat on.

It was soon going to be daybreak, and there couldn't possibly be testing on the artificial sun. Banagher looked at the person who wasn't even wearing a spacesuit. The figure left the artificial sun and floated towards the wall. It's obvious that the person was in trouble, and it would be easy to spot in daylight. However, at that moment, the artificial sun would be activated, and the surrounding air would be really hot. The cylinder that was 6km in diameter was a large source of light to the entire space colony, and would burn up anything nearby.

"…Not good."

Banagher looked at the watch. It was 5.26am. There's still less than 5 minutes to daylight. "Eh? What's wrong?" Banagher left behind Takuya as Takuya rubbed his eyes, kicked the table, and rushed through the empty cafeteria, using the pillar near the entrance as the support point and rushed to the corridor. At this moment where not even a second was to be wasted, he didn't even think of explaining this to anyone else, and the body that was pushed by impulse continued to rush to the worksite.

Part 8

She really couldn't understand what happened for the time being. In her eyes, what she could only see was the artificial sun pillar that was leaving her and the street lights and clouds on the inside of the wall appearing and disappearing at the same time as the winds blew past her ears.

As she kicked her legs about forward, the girl tried to stop the spinning on her body. However, against this artificial wind, such an action was futile. There was an endless steady supply of wind inside the colony to allow for convection of the sun's heat. The artificial convection installation that was installed in the zero gravity area was moving the air, creating a complicated flow of wind near the sun.

The girl held back the fear that was rising up her throat, telling herself to calm down. She had managed to slip into the artificial solar inspection area and arrived on the passageway that was parallel to the illuminating installation. She just needed to grab the mobile handle and move forward for about 20m, and she should be able to reach the other side of the space colony in less than 30 minutes—where her target, the colony builder.

However, she didn't expect that pathway to have a section cut off because of repairs. It was too late once she moved in for about 1km, felt that the tunnel was blocked and let go of the handle. The girl's body flew out in motion, breaking the plastic seal that blocked the passage, and dropped outside the passage.

At the same time, she knocked into the fire extinguisher that was placed on the platform, and got the gas squirted at her, causing the situation to become complicated. The girl was pushed away from the artificial sun pillar because of the gas pressure. And under the vacuum of zero gravity, there's nothing she could grab onto. The girl became a speck of space dust that was floating in the

core of the space colony. She was forced away by the gas pressure and the airflow convection, and was pushed down to the wall 3000m away—

The artificial sun was gradually getting further and further away. The layers of moving clouds and the street lights that were inside the wall were closing in. The centrifuge force of the space colony wouldn't work without direct contact. It looked like she could land safely, but the problem was the rotation speed that create the 1G worth of gravity. It looked slow from here, but in fact , the inside wall of the space colony was rotating about 600km per hour. The girl's body was out of the rotation speed, and if she got close to the inner wall and hit the wall that's rotating at high speeds, she would be pancaked.

However, she couldn't just wait for help in zero gravity as a premonition started. *BAM BAM*, continuous tremors could be heard through the air of the space colony. This was the voice of the artificial sun getting powered up. It was the awakening of a laminating device, the sound of it letting off light as it burned the air around it.

I don't want to die. No, I can't die. The girl didn't give up as she moved her limbs and tried to get close to the artificial sun's passageway. She was already prepared to die, but she wouldn't allow herself to die like this. For the sake of the warriors who fought to protect her, her parents who died early, and she wouldn' t forgive herself if she were to die in such an ugly manner.

This thought was more frightening than death itself. However, the artificial sun that seemed to mock the struggling girl got louder and louder, and the laminating installation started to brighten.

Part 9

Luckily, there was a mini mobile suit parked at the carpark beside the cafeteria. It was the latest model from the Toruro company, Type-800, commonly known as the <<Torohachi>>. There wasn't anyone on the machine, which, to Banagher, was a pleasant surprise.

Perhaps the operator went to the toilet as the key was still in the machine. Banagher sat inside the cockpit of the <<Torohachi>> to check whether it still had power. While the worker shouted: "HEY, YOU…!", Banagher shouted back: "Danger!" as he undid the feet clamp on the floor. As he ignored the middle-aged worker "WHO ARE YOU! DON'T MOVE!" and let the <<Torohachi>> move forward, a green ball-shaped object slammed into the helmet of the worker and jumped into the cockpit. "Haro…!?" Banagher couldn't help but exclaim before tucking Haro between his thighs before covering the hemisphere windshield visor.

Once Banagher did the basic minimum safety checks, he undid the magnetic locks on the legs. The short legs of the <<Torohachi>> kicked the ground and floated up. Banagher stepped on the gas, and the thruster at the back lit up. The <<Torohachi>> headed off towards the cargo exit of the space colony and accelerated.

At the front end of the space colony, the sudden slope of the zero gravity industrial area under the wall was called the 'mountain'. Like its name implied, it was a bare layer of rock and trees and plants covered the mortar-type airtight wall. If one looked up from the inside, what would be seen would be like a famous 3,000m high mountain—Mount Fuji. The mountaintop that was hidden amongst the clouds had many cable cars stations and

the exits for cargo ships as they move through the zero gravity belt . The <<Torohachi>> went through one entrance and moved towards the artificial sun. The artificial upflow that struck caused the machine to shake, but Banagher continued to look around for the figure floating in the darkness.

Without relying on night vision goggles, Banagher found the floating figure. He didn't spend the effort to feel how strange it was. Banagher again activated the thruster boost of the << Torohachi>>. This was different from driving in vacuum as the machine was heavy. The air that filled the entire space colony formed a wall, and the shaking of the machine was felt through the control rod. For a moment, he felt that he was really reckless, but this rash of sanity immediately disappeared.

The artificial sun started to glow, and there wasn't much time left before it was completely activated and burns the surrounding air. Banagher activated the motion sensor and let the relative distance between his machine and the target and the speeds show on the control screen. Though it was the same as collecting space junk, the target this time was a living human. If his methods were too rough, the person may be killed.

The distance from the figure got closer and closer, and he could already see the cape-like jacket fluttering from behind the windshield and the long and narrow limbs of a person. It was a girl—as his instincts told her this, a large amount of shaking happened to the machine, and Banagher hurriedly adjusted the power of the thruster boost. Haro floated up because of the impact as its eyes flashed, calling: "Do your best, do your best!"

The <<Torohachi>> again shot out the thrusters and closed in on the target. It seemed that the target seemed to notice the machine's sound and light as the figure that was floating in the vacuum turned to look at the machine. The jade green eyes had light in them even in the midst of the darkness as they looked like polished gems.

At that moment, the existence of a living being went through Banagher's body, and he immediately opened the windshield. This wasn't out of thought, but that his instincts were telling him that this body in front of him was too fragile to be held by the hard mechanical hand of the mini mobile suit.

The wind that struck hard covered his eyes and mouth. The windshield that was opened let in lots of wind, causing the body of the <<Torohachi>> to silt a lot. He used a hand to grab the controls to barely maintain the state of the machine, and used the other hand to reach for the girl. The girl that was floating with the winds widened her eyes and reached over here too. Once their eyes met, the <<Torohachi>> and the human figure grazed past each other for a moment, and Banagher held that person's hand and pulled her into the cockpit.

After that, the artificial sun glowed, bathing the body of the <<Torohachi>> in white light. Banagher continued to hold onto the human's slender and thin body as he closed the windshield visor and stepped on the gas. He didn't see the horrifying image of the air heating up and immediately expanding and twisting over. An explosive-like light suppressed them and sent the <<Torohachi>> descending to the inner wall.

The wind blew in through the windshield visor that wasn't completely closed, causing the purple jacket to be draped on Banagher. Banagher lost his bearings and stepped too hard onto the gas pedal. Even though he immediately pulled the jacket away and maintained eye contact, the large pillar supporting the artificial sun inside the wall was already right in front of him. The metal pillar came crashing over at the rotation speed of the space colony—about the same as a passenger jet, and grazed past the <<Torohachi>>'s frame.

The impact rang through the cockpit, and the numbness in Banagher's brain caused him to lose consciousness for a while. The

streets that were flowing below the feet were spinning wildly and fast approaching. The figure on the knees shouted: “We’ll fall…!” Feeling her breasts crushing his shoulders, Banagher finally managed to get himself out of confusion and responded: “I’ll think of something.” before looking at the current state of the inner wall after the high speed rotation. The <<Torohachi>> didn’t have the inertia to go back up again, and its strength wasn’t going to match the relative speed of the inner wall—having made such a conclusion within a second, Banagher again grabbed the control stick.

He used the maximum amount of thrust to make the << Torohachi>> move forward, trying his best to control the machine at a constant height while it descended. It moved onto the road that was located between the light industrial area and the residential area. Even though the speed was estimated to be more than 200km per hour, and that it would continue to accelerate with the wind flow, but there was a difference of 400km per hour in terms of relative speed. Once he checked to see that there were no vehicles or humans, Banagher muttered deep inside his heart “I can do this.” and deliberately lowered the height of the << Torohachi>> and flew into a group of buildings.

The <<Torohachi>> looked like it was trying its best to keep its thruster boost working as it continued to move towards the road with the space colony still rotating. It descended till 5m tall, went through the crane while under the high speeds of the wind, and struck from behind by the air. The height continued to descend. On seeing the rear view mirror, Banagher evaded the street lights and the electronic cars that were moving, and just when the height meter was about to reach zero, he shouted: “Brace for impact!”

The feet of the <<Torohachi>> hit the road, and suddenly, the machine that was gripped by the centrifuge force was tilted backwards like it was knocked away, causing an impact where one could imagine bones scattered all over the place. The impact and echoes rang in the brain, and the safety gasbags shot out from the control panel. While feeling intense pain from the safety belt and the tense shoulders and the touch as he held that slender waist with his palms, Banagher's consciousness was lost in the turmoil. The loud sounds that surrounded him and the jerks on the machine that was lying face up on the road were gradually moving further away, and the fragments of the asphalt road that was smashed covered his darkened vision. Then, his vision seemed to have what looked like cables used for a cable car, and finally, a large impact struck, and he was then surrounded in darkness.

The dirt that was raised up by the windshield fell through the cracks and landed on face. *Kinkyuu*, *Kinkyuu*, Haro continued to make noises and caused Banagher to wake up. He felt the pain on his neck and shoulders, frowned and looked up at the sky through the thoroughly broken windshield. The bright and familiar sky was right in front of him. The streets on the inner wall at the respective positions were also basked in light such that it's hard to even tell that it was an artificial sun giving off light. This was a sealed off space colony's vague sky.

On his chest, there was a face that was unconscious as it was lit by the light—Banagher wasn't completely awake as he saw the stranger's face as she was lying on his chest. What couldn't be called a figure but a real human was a girl of about the same age as

she was. The hair that was blown wildly had a beautiful beige color to it, and the delicate skin that was thoroughly white had some red in it. The eyes he saw at that moment—the bright jade-colored eyes that had such a deep impression on him were hidden under the long eyebrows.

There was a soft human smell and the smell of perfume coming out from her hair, floating into Banagher's nose that was used to gasoline. His heartbeat started to accelerate at this moment. Banagher gently put the girl's body away from him, checked that she was still breathing, and left her on the seat before climbing out of the cockpit.

It seemed that the <<Torohachi>> seemed to have broken through the railing of the green park, dug some lawn and crashed into the hill. The short body was half buried in dirt. Even though it couldn't be seen from here, the surface of the track should be rather defaced like the devastation caused by a landing of a meteor .

There wasn't anyone around, and the morning brought some light amounts of mist in the park. It was so quiet that only the voices of sparrows could be heard. If it was on a bright day where many people were walking around…thinking about this, Banagher finally realized that he was in big trouble as his knees started to tremble. The police and the fire department would be here immediately, creating lots of commotion in this entire space colony , and he may be arrested. He wanted to save someone, but he drove a mini mobile suit around recklessly and destroyed the streets. Things weren't going to be dealt with so easily, and he may even be expelled—

Suddenly, his ankle was grabbed and tugged at hard. Banagher, who was standing on the <<Torohachi>>, unexpectedly lost his footing, and fell before he could even shout out.

His face and stomach hit the bare ground, and the pain could be felt through his nostrils. He couldn't breathe for a moment, but Banagher still used both hands to try and get up. However, someone pressed down on him, and Banagher's face was buried in dirt again.

"How are you!?"

Banagher was held down on the floor by the person who let out this voice, had his head pressed down on the floor and his arms twisted behind his back. Unable to move, Banagher tried to turn around to see who was the one speaking, and shown in one corner of his eyes was those pair of jade-colored eyes.

The refined jade-colored eyes were giving off a cold stare as they looked down at him. Banagher moved his sandy mouth that was filled with dirt and murmured: "And you even ask how I am …"

"I saw you floating near the sun, so I…"

Banagher still couldn't understand why this slender looking girl was using a hard militaristic tone to talk and hold him down. The girl still did not let her guard down. At this moment, Haro didn't seem to understand what was going on as it spoke "Banagher, Banagher, are you alright?" and went about the head. The girl seemed to turn her head around, see the Haro that was bouncing

around inside the <<Torohachi>>, and slightly removed the grip of her right hand on Banagher. “You’re a citizen of this colony?” Once Banagher nodded his head, she finally released Banagher on the neck before getting up.

Before Banagher could even regain his freedom and stand up, the girl had climbed into the <<Torohachi>>'s cockpit, seemingly checking the control panel to see whether it was still powered. The girl didn’t apologize nor thank him as she merely said ‘this can still move’, causing Banagher to blink in a bewildered manner.

“I’m in a rush here. Can you send me to the entrance of the colony builder?”

The girl poked her upper body from the control panel and said that nonchalantly. “Space builder…you mean the <<Snail>>?” Banagher asked back, and the girl confirmed this with her determined expression.

“No way. That’s not allowed. And you have to get to the hospital first.”

“You caught me well, so I wasn’t hurt. Please, it’s urgent.”

“I told you I can’t! I’m already going to get punished for operating this. I may even get my license revoked!”

While Banagher tried to explain himself, the girl listened as she gave a doubting ‘Why must you resist me’ look, and it seemed that both of them lost it and in another world altogether. However, the girl still remained calm. She jumped off the cockpit and muttered:

"There's no time." with her words obviously sounding a little anxious.

"I have to find someone and talk to him. The situation can't be saved if we don't go faster."

"What? Is something going to happen?"

"A war. There'll be a large-scale war again. We can still stop it if we move now."

Banagher's heart pounded as he looked at the girl's eyes. The deep jade-colored eyes didn't look like they lost their sanity, and neither did they look like they were hoping for any agreement. It's just a strong will that showed that she had to do it. Banagher felt attracted to that strength of hers. He would have nodded his head immediately if not for the sirens of the patrol cars.

The sirens of the patrol cars weren't coming from one direction, but from many. The girl turned around to look back before looking straight at Banagher in the eyes for him to quickly decide. He held back the throbbing in his heart and looked away from the girl, saying: "Sorry, I can't do this." The girl lowered her jaw and looked grim immediately, using this chance to give Banagher a cold stare.

"How spineless…!"

She muttered and ran off without looking back. That voice stabbed deep inside Banagher's heart, and a pain that was even sharper and pronounced than his own injuries permeated throughout his entire body as he watched the girl go.

"What's with her…"

As he casually left these words, Banagher remembered that he didn't have time to ask for her name. As the girl's profile vanished in the morning fog, what replaced them was the large number of patrol cars giving off blurry red lights through the fog as they entered Banagher's eyes.

Chapter 2

Part 1

In the starry universe, there was a biplane that's flying with a propeller. It was a middle-century classical plane that operates on gasoline.

As he stared at the plane blankly, Riddhe Marcenas imagined himself to be sitting on it. He was wearing a flying visor, a white muffler around his neck, and using fighting flying skills that were like acrobatics to tease the enemy's destroyer. A pilot had to be like this. Even if the propeller planes were all replaced by jet planes or even evolved into space fighter jets with g, pilots were all proud riders. A pilot shouldn't be part of minor things like being called out by an older non-commission officer or pointed at by a senior pilot. That's the bad customs that passed down from the navy. And the pilots after the mid-century occupy a unique atmosphere called the air force, and they're an unique existence that had to be separated from ordinary soldiers. At least they shouldn't forget about this…that's what he thought.

However, reality was cruel.

"Ensign Riddhe, the captain's calling you over to his room."

A window opened in the space, and the Mechanical Officer Jona Gibney's mustached face chuckled as he said that. He was the oldest and the most experienced of the maintenance staff, and he was one of those senior soldiers who would not hesitate to scold

an officer. Riddhe was sitting on the linear seat and pouted, "Why always me?"

"You have to bring stuff to the captain's room. This job is more or less suited for a rich boy!"

"I'm an officer too, you know! This has nothing to do with lineage, right?"

"Only those who shot down an enemy's plane has the right to say that. Now go!"

Mechanical Officer Gibney's face disappeared from the screen, and only angry roars echoed throughout the cockpit. Riddhe unhappily turned off the all-view monitor and grabbed the biplane model that was floating above his head.

Once the space simulated image disappeared, the screens that were connected on the inside walls of the ball, and the cockpit suddenly became a cramped and unpleasant cockpit. Riddhe used a plastic bag to wrap the plastic body of the biplane and put it behind the display guard before opening the door. The door that could only be passed through by bending down was right in front of him. The sound of welding, cranes and metals rubbing against each other entered the cockpit.

Also, there was a chatter behind him, and Gibney, who was in that jumpsuit that the mechanical staff would wear was showing blank white eyes. Riddhe kicked the linear seat and easily let his

body float out of the cockpit. Gibney's body didn't move as he floated in the air, and he said with a heinous tone, "Were you meditating inside that cockpit again?"

"I'm embracing the time when I can be one with my beloved plane. Are you touched?"

"And you even dare to say that you brought a toy in!"

"Please don't randomly touch and spoil it. That's a limited edition. It was hard to get it!"

One has to strike the fine balance between being orderly and doing things one's own way. One shouldn't remember the grudges when there's vexing words said, but to forget it after hearing it. Having grasped the secret to ship service, Riddhe took the documents he was to deliver and left. "Who cares about you, Mr Mania?" after leaving these words behind, Gibney looked like he exchanged places with Riddhe as he slipped into the cockpit. His underlings, 4 new technicians in spacesuits followed him from behind and looked into the cockpit from all directions.

Their job was to pay attention to all of Gibney's actions and quickly hand the important tools to him. This deck was often filled with air, so there was no need to wear the bulky work spacesuit. However, Gibney wanted the rookies to wear them at all time. " What'll happen if we're attacked and there's a hole in the wall? Once you're sucked outside, the blood in your body will immediately freeze and you'll immediately die." That was Gibney'

s saying, and he did see this personally on the ship he was on. Those who experienced the One Year War, the ones who fought in war, had the most weight in their words.

When Riddhe was first assigned to this ship, he would also show respect to this, and would wear a pilot's spacesuit when he entered the deck. However, he would now be lightly dressed in a jumpsuit and a jetpack. Since he's riding on a spaceship, he will die anyway if they were attacked, no matter where they were, and even Gibney himself wouldn't wear a spacesuit before the siren rang. After seeing the tense profiles of the rookies, Riddhe thought that they were really pitiful…but this made Riddhe remember his own sadness, and he suddenly had an urge to drop the documents that he was told to deliver onto the floor. He took a deep breath, held back this urge, grabbed and messed up his blond hair that was a little longer, and used the steel cable to move alongside the floor.

As he was being dragged by the cable, he could see his personal suit fully as he went near the passage that's located at the wall. It was a blue humanoid body that showed the artistry of straight and curved contours. This was the RGZ-95 <<ReZEL>> that had a variable booster unit behind. As the front part of the booster was extended out from the back of the head, it looked a lot larger than an ordinary mobile suit. Gibney and his subordinates who were gathered at the cockpit right at the abdomen looked like they were the size of the <<ReZEL>>'s fist.

On the large mobile suit deck that was more than 7 levels high, there were 7 similar-typed <<ReZEL>> and the main forces of the Earth Federation RGM-89 <<Jegan>> were also at their fixed

positions and undergoing maintenance. The <<Jegan>> was a mass-produced frame, and though the <<ReZEL>> was classified as the latest transformable mobile suit, both mobile suits inherited the basic design from the Federation Army's mobile suit, the RGM-79 <<GM>>, which wasn't changed too much. Most notably, the visor protector on the head that blocks the optical sensor was of the exact same design. Riddhe's personal suit, the <<ReZEL>> had the identification number NA-R008 on the chest, and the visor that was basically its eyes was being washed.

There was no sign of any streamlined winged mobile suits, only the humanoid mobile suits that looked like they will pop out in old cartoons. This scene just looked like the rows of Buddha statues Riddhe saw with he was young and went on a trip to Asia, which irritated him again. The beauty of aircraft was created from the coordination of air resistance. Thus, it would be natural for machines that's to be used in vacuum to display other characteristics. Also, the reason why space fighter units that resembled planes and replaced by mobile suits called 'robots' was because of the One Year War that happened when Riddhe was 6.

If one hadn't found the new particles that would bring about the revolution to physics, the Minovsky Particles that would jam all electronic devices, there wouldn't be humanoid machines that formed the basis of recent wars. If it wasn't for the creation of mobile suits and the Principality of Zeon's creation <<Zaku>> being such a huge success that caused the Earth Federation which had overwhelming advantages to be on the brink of defeat, this hangar would still have signs of the descendant of the biplane, the space fighter jets.

Of course, the fighter jets didn't disappear completely. The main machine of the Federation's air force, the <<TIN Cod II>> was a fighter plane that resembled an aircraft. The space army still had the fighter planes that were used for long distance support, but they were already out, and the budget for new machines was already interrupted for so long. Also, once the air force finished clearing the remnants of Zeon Forces on Earth, they were treated like they fulfilled their purpose and were abandoned. No matter how much one liked planes, to this person who graduated from the Officer Cadet School with outstanding grades, it wasn't an attractive path.

In the end, Riddhe came here. He was affliated to a top-notch large ship under the Federation, and became a pilot of a mobile suit. He managed to fulfill his dream since childhood…and he even used his links with his 'family'. What he got was completely different from what he expected though. He was living in the world whether that brave pilot was gone and began living his life while being called a 'young lord' by experienced pilots and soldiers as he was told off every day.

Considering that he couldn't get away from the pressure of his ' family' whenever he goes, this was still a surrounding he could compromise with. He continued to hold back the unhappiness within him and reached his hand out to the handle on the deck. Suddenly, he heard voices from under his feet going 'what's with that ugly and fake tank?'. A pilot who was being pulled by the cable was glaring at the two vehicles parked in the corner of the deck.

The dark brown machines that were over 10m in length were large crawlers. They did look like armored cars or tanks. While leaving <<Lunar Two>>, about 30 transport carrier personnel suddenly came in with the vehicles. As Riddhe watched these vehicles, other voices could be heard, 'Did the special forces bring these people in?'.

"They had been using cover to cover it, and they didn't allow us technicians to touch."

"The killer squad of the hunters. Such annoying visitors."

On hearing these bad words that were deliberately said for others to hear, the 'visitors' who were maintaining the vehicle—the special Federation space forces ECOAS glared over, but the pilots themselves didn't seem to reflect on this as they went above while holding the cable. Instead of merely being crude, it was more like small fries acting childish, and Riddhe really felt like sighing.

The ECOAS, also known as the hunter squad, had quite the bad reputation. They would often have a clear divide from the ship crew, and they would cover their equipment with cloth and not allow others to get near. Riddhe really didn't like such secrecy at all. However, it would be immature for him to return nail for nail. Basically, the training and regimentation of the space army were all like the navy, and the group mentality for each ship was too strong. An experienced soldier like Gibney could be so cool was

because of the bad habit of experience triumphing over rank. The concept of the term ‘ship’ in space and bringing the seaman’s mentality into space was the cause of all this.

If the spaceship could be described as a large plane, learning the elements of the air force may be like becoming an independent organization that had open communication channels. While repeating the meaningless grumbles, Riddhe looked over at the armored car-like thin the ECOAS had. The squad members were getting ready as they started to pull the covers off the vehicles, most likely because they were getting close to their destination, and they gave a tense feeling from their backs, making that place look like a completely different world. They were dressed in impromptu T-shirts and army pants, but they were highly skilled in moving under zero gravity, and they wouldn’t shout randomly. They weren’t extremely muscular, but the abnormally thick upper body and the thick chest muscles made them look like they trained .

Riddhe’s eyes met one of them. It was the man who shot a glare at his crewmate for saying harsh words. Riddhe gave a smile as he tried to compensate for his crewmate’s unreasonable action. But the man didn’t smile as he looked at Riddhe like he was looking at a ‘thing’ and then looked away before continuing his work.

He didn’t look like he was looking at other people. The cold inorganic-like eyes was definitely of someone nicknamed a ‘hunter ’. Riddhe felt like he was being held at knifepoint on the throat as he hurriedly left.

Part 2

The ship's name was called <<Nahel Argama>>. It was an assault landing ship that belonged to the independent unit of the Earth Federation, Londo Bell. Right now, it was in between Earth and the moon, right before the dark wasteland space of L1. In three hours, they would be entering the space debris field, and they will deploy all forces to monitor the region.

The ship that was almost 400m in length had a mobile suit catapult launcher at the deck of the ship. The bridge was right in the middle like a bow, and there were 2 giant wings with hidden solar panels extending out from the back of the bridge and reaching out to both sides. If one were to designate the two engines that are equipped on the rear left and right sides of the ship as the hind legs and the catapult decks on both sides as the fore legs, it would look like a sphinx with wings or a large wooden horse. Based on this point, this ship could be said to have inherited the Pegasusc-class obile assault landing ship that was active during the One Year War—the Federation's first mobile suit carrier <<White Base>>.

However, the <<Nahel Argama>> didn't belong to any class, and neither did it have a similar ship. If there's a need to classify it, it should be classified as <<Nahel Argama>>, a one and only ship. That's because it was a ship that wasn't designed through standard National Security planning during the time after the war, in the internal tussle that divided the Federation Army into half—what one would call the Gryps War. However, it didn't have interchangeability and was hard to deal with, so it was removed from the army's reorganization plans. Though there was a large scale reconstruction after the Gryps War, Londo Bell, which took it

, didn't know what to do with it, and it wasn't set as a cornerstone of a fleet. It was hard to mobilize, so there was no accompanying fleet, causing it to be mobilized as a single ship.

This ship of the external group of the space army Londo Bell was an isolated one…and the isolation caused a twisted group mentality. It couldn't be helped that the old habits of rejecting others happened. Riddhe used this thinking to scatter the anger that he couldn't purge and left the mobile suit deck to move towards the center of the ship.

These weren't all bad things, and Riddhe could even say that it' s better for him to be isolated. Also, he didn't really dislike this atmosphere completely. He was the one who volunteered to be assigned to Londo Bell, and he considered his position and suitability before being assigned to the 'Nahel Argama'. If he was sent to a main fleet, that wouldn't be all the pressure. He would probably end up with his superiors fearing him, his peers hating him, and he couldn't fulfill his duty in such an environment.

The weight of his 'family' was this great. He was the eldest son of the important senator in the Federation Central Council Ronan Marcenas. It was a political family that once gave birth to a Prime Minister, and he was the heir to the Marcenas' glory. This guy's here to pilot a mobile suit? Impossible. He'll most likely be decommissioned after a while. It's not rare for a political heir to enter an officer cadet school as one would say that being outstanding in the Federation army would be a shortcut to being a politician. Most of the time, he would be intending to get along with future generals to creating camaraderie with the army…

No! But no matter how many times he emphasized this, such words continued to be echoed. I didn't want to be a politician. My dream is a pilot, so I entered the Officer Cadet School even with my family against it. However, having entered officer cadet school for 4 years and the mobile suit learning squad for a year, Riddhe really felt that it was meaningless to argue back, and didn't want to face these words already. In contrast, he started to search his way from the center. It was a place where high ranking officers wouldn't try to latch on to him so that they would be outstanding in the future. Even if they teased him as 'young lord', this was a place where they wouldn't have any ill intention, but treat him as a pilot—

However, it was unexpected that they would call him to be a runner. Grimacing inside, Riddhe let go of the moveable handle and used the momentum to float through the path and stop in front of the lift that would lead to the gravity area. Mihiro Oiwakken, who was his junior that graduated in the next batch, was coincidentally in the lift.

"Oh my, are you delivering these documents?" "Yeah." Both of them continued to talk as the lift carried them. The inside of the << Nahel Argama>> had a cylindrical gravity area that was like a space colony. It uses centrifugal force to create gravity on the inside of the cylinder. Of course, as the diameter was smaller, it could only create a weak amount, but even if the object's not fastened to the floor, it could keep it to the floor. When flying for a long time, especially while eating and undergoing military medical treatment, this design would be extremely important.

The lift went through the axis on the side of the gravity area and arrived at the rotary axis of the cylinder. Both of them were exchanging information this time about the emergency departure and the uncertain battle plan before the door opened again. The destination was the Construction Space Colony <<Industrial 7>> that's in the Dark Wasteland space. The main operation would be carried out by ECOAS, and the <<Nahel Argama>> was in charge of sending them.

"<<Industrial 7>>'s Anaheim Electronics' Space Colony, right? The Dark Wasteland Region a place where a new Side will be built on in the space colony redevelopment project…I don't think that it' s a place where the 'Sleeves' will show up."

"I don't know about the details, but the atmosphere in the bridge is really bad. We're already unhappy that the hunters are using us as a transport, and we may even end up in a real battle. First Mate Liam was forcing the captain to make the hunters tell the truth…"

"Captain Otto can't hold on for long if that old hag's going to continue pressuring him like that, right? Even I can't handle it."

"Yeah. It's really hard to imagine him when he's commanding."

Even though she would say this, Mihiro herself looked like she was far from the active battle. Her dark brown eyes and hair showed a heavy Eastern heritage. She was wearing a grey officer uniform and was shorter than Riddhe. Perhaps it was her inferiority complex in her height that she was so hardworking, and

she was giving the nickname ‘mini-tank’ in Officer Cadet School. However, she wouldn’t give a vexing feeling, and is a nice female officer who wouldn’t lose her cool. The way she rolls her eyes would give people the impression of a small animal like a chipmunk instead of a mini tank.

22 year old Mihiro was only deployed to Londo Bell for half a year, and Riddhe, who graduated a year earlier, went to the mobile suit learning squad, so he was assigned here at the same time as her, and for the two of them, it was their first duty in their first ship. It’s been three years since the war with the remnants of Zeon in what people called ‘Char’s Counterattack’, and right now, even Londo Bell, which was meant to be an immediate response team, had not fought for a long time. Thus, there were quite a lot of people who didn’t have actual combat experience. Recently, the renegade organization called ‘Sleeves’ were starting to move, and had fought against several squads under Londo Bell. However, the <<Nahel Argama>>, which was on the outside, didn’t take part in the assault, thus, new cadres like Riddhe weren’t the only ones who couldn’t imagine the actual scenario.

“Real battle…since we have the hunters on board, it won’t be an exercise, I guess.”

“It’s troubling to have to fight secretly in a civilian space colony. <<Industrial 7>> has the school Anaheim Electronics runs, right?”

Mihiro said this as that student-like face of hers became gloomy. As he saw that delicate Eastern skin of hers, Riddhe’s thoughts became a little uncouth, and the lift reached the gravity area before opening. After saying goodbye to Mihiro who was heading to the

bridge, Riddhe let his body float through the passage that looked like the axis of the rotating gravity area.

Once he landed on the gravity, the body that was captured by gravity creaked, and Riddhe felt like he was struck by dizziness. He grabbed the handle on the wall. Riddhe frowned as the blood in his body was being pulled down as he didn't feel well about that. He moved past the weapons personnel who came over from the cafeteria and entered another lift. The captain's room was at the lowest level in the inside wall, where the gravity was the strongest. After descending down the axis for another 50m, his body started to become heavier because of the zero gravity during the journey, which caused his body to expand.

In fact, the atmosphere in the captain's room was rather heavy too. After reporting and calling out 'excuse me', Riddhe walked into the captain's room, and immediately knew the reason.

The captain's room of the <<Nahel Argama>> had the operation room and the reception room. The reception room itself was a wide space that was more than 60 sq meters large. The ship was being expanded continuously to match the current mobile suit capacity needed. However, the basic amount of facilities needed wouldn't require that much space, which ended up allowing them to use as much space as they wanted to. Inside the reception room right now was captain Otto Midas leading the people in charge of the weapons and the navigation were here. However, they weren't the ones who made the presence in the room heavy. In contrast to the tired looking captain, there was a commander sitting on the opposite sofa, and there was an organization where everyone was dressed in suits—the dangerous 'guests' who were riding on this

ship. They were the ones who made the reception area feel so heavy.

Such a heavy feeling made him remember about his 'family'. Once Riddhe entered the room, he immediately saw the mobile suit squadron leader, Norman Basilicok. He avoided the looks of the rest as he handed the documents over to the colonel. He wanted to immediately turn around and leave the room, but Commander Norm said, "I need to sign this. Please wait for a moment." Causing him to remain where he was.

Sitting at a corner of the L-shaped sofa and signing the nominal roll, Norm's face looked rather unhappy, and Captain Otto took off his cap, a rare feat for him. As they had to put on spacesuits in battle, the space army wouldn't use military caps when riding in ships, but Otto would definitely wear the normal cap. This was to hide his reclining hairline, and it's an open secret in the ship. Some vicious mechanics would even say, "Does he even need to worry about being bald when he looks like that?"

"We're fine with ECOAS leading this battle."

Otto touched that head of his that was lacking in hair and broke the silence. The voice of a middle-ranked officer bemoaning matched his face that looked like an old uncle in a civilian factory.

"But Londo Bell also has what Londo Bell needs to do. At least tell us your objective…"

"That's classified. I personally have no rights to reveal this."

Sitting opposite Otto was the fierce commander, who answered without an expression. He was the leader of the ECOAS squad, Daguza Mackle. His straightened back and those sturdy thighs of his would make one wonder whether he could still maintain the same position even when someone takes the sofa away. No matter whether it's the stone-like expression or the sharp expression that would make anyone freeze, he does look like a man who could lead the hunters.

Commander Norm stopped his hand from flipping through the documents and stared at Daguza. Riddhe found that he was in a situation where he didn't want to face at all, as his straight body froze harder. As the leader of the counter-terrorist Special Forces, Daguza had handled much more covert missions. Compared to his expression, Otto, who was forced onto the Nahel Argama which no one wanted, lost out a lot. Norman and all the crew on the ship saw that the captain was losing out a lot, and were obviously looking outraged. However, Daguza didn't really pay much attention to these stares. Riddhe was right in the middle of the epitome of a messy situation.

"But this is to be held in a civilian space colony. At least make some explanation to reduce the causalities to the minimum…"

"That's why I'm allowed to come along."

Otto manned up his pride as a captain and spoke, and the one who interrupted him was one of the men dressed in suits beside Daguza. Amongst the men dressed in traditional suits, there was a

man who was wearing a collared Nehru Jacket. He placed the Nahel Argama model he was playing in his hand back onto the table and looked around at everyone.

"I'll reveal this then. There's a deal that's about to take place in <<Industrial 7>>. The parties involved are the 'Sleeves' and the leader of the Vist Foundation."

The man said as he smiled and relaxed his plump face. He was a 'visitor' that came along with Daguza and the ECOAS members, and the one with the largest profile. They only knew that he was an important member of Anaheim Electronics, and his name was Alberto. This man had an arrogant smile, and he seemed to be telling everyone that the authority over this entire battle is in him. Otto asked back, "Did you say Vist Foundation…" and at this moment, Norman and Daguza narrowed their eyes in unison as they gave unhappy looks.

"That's right. On the surface, it's a philanthropic foundation that transports art pieces into space colonies, but in fact, we control practically all of the Vist Foundation's wealth and power. Though there's a difference in the authority wielder, it's the major stakeholder of our company here."

With his back facing the Earth Celestial Sphere map on the wall, Alberto ignored the unhappy looks everyone gave.

"Of course, <<Industrial 7>> is our company's asset. However, even if there's some damage, we have to prevent the deal between

the 'Sleeves' and the "Vist Foundation'. This isn't Anaheim's decision only, but also the conclusion the highest authorities of the Federation Army came to."

His eyes with double eyelids made him look like he got a doll like face, but his demeanor and bulky frame really made it hard to tell his age. Though Anaheim Electronics was the largest military enterprise in the world, but for a civilian like Alberto to take part just because he was a crucial figure in this, for what reason did the highest authorities make such a decision? "What's this…deal that we needed to prevent at all cost?" Captain Otto asked with a somewhat trembling voice.

"It's the <<Laplace Box>>. The Vist Foundation intend to hand that thing over to the 'Sleeves'."

Immediately, the heavy damp air scattered all over, and Riddhe felt cold air blow through the reception room. "<<Laplace Box>> …?" Otto frowned.

"No one knows what that thing is, or even what's inside. But one thing's certain. Once the <<Laplace Box>> is opened, it would bring about the end of the Earth Federation government."

Alberto leaned his back on the sofa as he gave a serious look. Captain Otto tried to force a smile, but wasn't successful as his stiff expression started to ache in numbness. Daguza's sharp expression remained on Alberto.

"The Vist Foundation hid the <<Laplace Box>> and used that to preserve its wealth. Anaheim shares the same fate with it too. No

matter what the aim is, we must stop the leader who lost his mind, if the thing that can topple the Federation government lands in the 'Sleeves' hands…things will become serious, captain."

Alberto said as he gave a self-mocking smile. Facing the doubts and fears everyone showed as they remained silent, Riddhe could only curse himself for meeting such an unlucky and unfortunate situation.

Part 3

No matter how one walked on the side of the corridor, there was the sound of a fist slamming into flesh. Marida Crus let go of the moving handle and saw the back of Flaste Schole.

"IT'S BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T CHECK PROPERLY THAT WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT WE WERE USED AS TRANSPORT!"

Right in front of Flaste, who was roaring away, was a young deck crewman whose face was beaten till it was red and swollen. Under zero gravity, both of them had their feet stuck to the ground by magnets, so anyone who's hit would be hurting. Even if Flaste held back, that hard metal-like punch that can't be dodged landed straight on his face. The crewman swayed about and stood still, saying, "I won't give any excuses for this." While blood was dripping from his mouth.

"THAT'S JUST YOU TRYING TO ACT COOL! WHY DON'T YOU JUST GET ON YOUR KNEES AND APOLOGIZE!?"

Flaste grabbed the front of the crewman's hair and looked like he intended to deliver a few more punches. However, he was stopped by a voice "Stop fighting." Marida watched the human wall that was gathered on the passageway scatter, and Captain Zinnerman's bearded face appeared.

He sounded calm, but the expression hidden under the captain' s hat showed utter distress. It's been an hour since they got a signal from the headquarters <<Palau>> that 'she' went missing. In the large Earth Celestial Sphere, the <<Palau>> itself would be a lone island in the large ocean. If she disappeared, it's likely that she would be hiding inside the ships that come in and goes out. After having checked the entire ship thoroughly, they found that one of the storerooms that was used as a storeroom had signs of a stowaway inside, which caused a huge commotion in the ' Garencieres'.

Marida herself joined in the search, but 'her' presence wasn't inside the ship. It seemed that she slipped out during the mess when they docked. It was the crewman's mistake for not noticing that she left, and he should be punched by Flaste, but everyone knew that they couldn't solve the problem by getting angry. Marida ignored the men who were staring at each other and went into the cabin 'she' looked like 'she' was in.

She looked through the window on the wall and out to the central dock, closed her eyes and concentrated. She couldn't grasp the presence of people moving about, and the messy thoughts that was like heat from a crowd caused her head to spin. Though she felt a little hot on the forehead, she couldn't detect 'her' presence. There were too many people. Marida could only be amazed about

how the human presences she could focus on in the battlefield could move about messily at will. As expected, an artificial being couldn't detect a specific presence—

"She's inside this space colony…but it's not good if we take action and get held at ransom by our trade partner."

Zinnerman said outside the entrance. Marida wiped away the sweat on her hands that came out unknowingly and returned back to the corridor.

"Is it likely that the 'girl' made contact with the other party already?"

"It's likely that 'she' was opposed to this right from the beginning. Most likely, she made contact with Vist Foundation…"

Once Flaste pushed the crewman aside and finished saying that, Gilboa Sant continued on. Zinnerman watched his two henchmen, said "Not really" and put on his captain's hat.

"It's impossible to make contact with the outside world from Palau. She most likely intends to make direct contact!"

Most likely, she wanted to prevent the deal of the <<Laplace Box>>. Zinnerman let air flow through his hair that's linked to his beard and put on the old captain's hat. His eyes showed bitterness and pride. During these past years, he put in his heart and soul to protect 'her', and to this man who viewed himself as her substitute guardian, he may be able to judge that 'she' would do this, and this was somewhat of a self-defeat feeling. Marida was thinking as

such, but decided firmly that she didn't understand this, and looked away from her master who looked somewhat old now.

She only knows one thing, and that is, this is a huge crisis that would bring about danger to the entire organization. If they lose her, the 'Sleeves' will lose their focal point, and the organization they were finally able to build will develop cracks. If she even ends up in the Federation's hands, the problem wouldn't be only about the organization called the 'Sleeves'. It may even bring everything to an immediate halt, the 16 years of war—or even the struggle that originate about half a century ago. All the sacrifice, blood, sweat that were shed for this would lose all meaning. The 'Sleeves' and the members of the <<Garencieres>> will lose their support.

'She', who was really smart, couldn't possibly not understand this. This was foolish…but as she thought this, Marida felt that doing this would fit 'her' nature, and thus she stopped thinking. No matter whether it was about 'her' or the 'Sleeves', all the necessary decisions were to be made by her master, and she only needed to obey. The more she thinks, the more she would hesitate when carrying out the order. It's something an ordinary person would normally do. After using this logical thinking process of hers, Marida gave Zinnerman a look that showed that she was waiting for instructions.

"Please, Marida. That child doesn't know about normal life, so she wouldn't be too far off. She'll probably leave clues behind."

Perhaps sensing the stare over at him, Zinnerman looked over at her and said this. This was the minimum transmission of talking and breathing, the familiar voice of her master. After answering '

understood' simply, Marida left the scene. After hearing Flaste's voice "Don't create any commotion" from behind, Marida took the lift and head towards the bridge area.

The <<Garencieres>>, which had a vertical landing function, has the end of the ship as the floor when it lands; which made it look like a building, and the bridge at the front of the ship was at the highest level. While they're docked with the port now, the floor inside the ship that's parallel to the port is lying horizontally. The lift itself is moving horizontally, but under zero gravity, the scenery around would decide how it looked. Marida 'ascended' by about the equivalent of 10 levels and entered the bridge. She then entered the bottom of the bridge—or rather—the back—where the server room was. In this small room that's filled with communication equipment and screens, the crewman continued to stare at the screen all this while, and the sound of the keyboard being typed on never stopped.

Besides the colony news network that anyone could read, they could see the construction progress of <<Industrial 7>>, the blueprint and even the movement of the industrial workers. As they could use the network provided by the port while they were docked and connect to the colony's network, a highly skilled hacker could check out a large amount of information. After plucking away the coffee tube from the air, Marida asked "How is it?" and the crewman didn't look back as he tossed a printed paper over. What's printed on it was the hottest selling news at the moment.

"A mini mobile suit was forced to land in the park. The student who used it insisted that he used it to save someone…is it?"

The sound of things piecing together rang in her mind. Marida looked at the time the news was broadcasted, and confirmed that the time was already past 9. She held onto the printed paper and left the server room.

Part 4

"…As described above, the One Year War ended at the large scale battle at A Baoa Qu. After that, the Principality of Zeon transferred control over to the new republic and signed a peace treaty, and where is the lunar city where the peace treaty was signed? Banagher Links?"

Fidgeting around and passing through the back of the classroom, Banagher was about to sit down at his seat, but was called out by his teacher, Mr Bancroft, and was immediately stunned.

"Yes. Un, that…'Von Braun'?"

"It's 'Granada'." *BAM*. After slamming the desk and correcting it, Mr Bancroft adjusted his glasses in an unhappy manner. "I heard about everything. Sit down."

What's going on? Banagher muttered inside his heart as he sat at a corner of the fan-shaped table. Takuya and the other students gave him looks as he plugged his laptop into the power port at the table. He opened out the retractable keyboard, entered his log in ID, and the world history definition that he missed out was shown on the screen.

It's said that the advance in technology in the old century and the wireless network system weren't rare at all—an age where even handphones could be carried along—right now, the network and phones were all wired. That's because as humans are living in human colonies, such 'intricate technology', there's a strict limit on the electric waves used. However, as there's Minovsyu particles floating everywhere, the limit became meaningless. These Minovsky particles that were of unknown origin causes electric short circuits of all types to happen often. Although there were many protective measures for life support systems, it's a habit after the One Year War to print a copy of data out.

In other worlds, this Earth Celestial Sphere still had Minovsky particles floating about after the war. To put it plainly, there's still a need for it—war continues to happen. Banagher suddenly thought about this and felt that his neck was aching a little like it was twisted. Of course, it need not be a real battle. Particles were also scattered for battle training. Recently, it's said that even trading ships would scatter the particles to deal with pirates. Some of them would definitely float over from a real battlefield, right? Maybe at this moment, someone's betting his life and gets burned by a laser. Just like how he saw a mobile suit this morning amongst them remains.

"A war. There'll be a large-scale war again."

The jade-colored eyes flashed through his mind as those words rang beside his ears. Banagher shook his head that was still swirling and gathered his concentration on the history lecture.

"The Principality of Zeon was a military country that was controlled by the Zabi family. The Zeonism that Zeon Deikum promoted described that humans in space shall bring a brand new 'Newtype thinking', and garnered lots of supports like Gihren Zabi. It wasn't Deikum's own intent, but after he died, his name was used by the Zabi family as an excuse for a war of independence. In a certain sense, it was still a dangerous thought."

Someone could actually say such words even though it's not knowledge derived from their own experience. How does it feel? Seeing Mr Bancroft continue to talk away, he wondered as a chat window appeared in the corner of his laptop.

This was to be expected. He was the one who caused an uproar in the entire colony by uprooting a cable on the road. How would the other students who weren't motivated let this off? Banagher impatiently pressed the button and let the chat window appear on his monitor.

"Master Icarus. How does it feel to be investigated by the police ?"

Most likely, Takuya was asking on behalf of the entire class. " Icarus?" Banagher asked back, and then, there was a link to a webpage. Banagher clicked on the click to check.

It was the front page of the 'Daily 7' news that Anaheim Electronics run. Banagher saw the photo of the Torohachi in the

lawn and the headline 'The Icarus that challenged the Artificial sun sadly fell onto the park', and immediately turned off the webpage.

He felt the students around him all holding back their laughter as they looked at him. "Am I wrong to save someone?" Banagher answered.

"I heard that the person you saved disappeared like smoke." " What did the police say about you using a mini-mobile suit on your own and wrecking property?" "What about the College?" The students asked, and Banagher used one hand to support his face and he typed with one hand.

"The surveillance camera of the maintenance system captured the image of the girl, so it was deemed that I did save someone. I was given a severe verbal warning and acquitted of charges. From the way the counseling teacher came to get me from the police, it seems that I don't have too much problems with the school, but I have to head to the principal's office after school."

The male students, who made up about 70% of the class, started to get excited and tap away at their keyboard "A girl!?" "Age, looks?" "What did you talk about?" "Where did she come about?" …On seeing the screen seemingly come to life, Banagher entered, " I don't know. The police's still looking for her." At this moment, the sound of the lecture desk rang throughout the classroom.

"You people. Don't think that you can slack around just because it seems that history isn't so useful to your work. Anaheim won't hire idiots who can't even pass a high school standard. Don't just stupidly believe that they will hire all you people!"

Mr Bancroft used his ultimate technique, and the students immediately closed their chat windows and looked back at the podium. The reason why vocations were quickly switched was because the vocational students know that their future jobs will lie in the teachers' hands. Banagher sighed and focused on the lecture screen. The One Year War, the Gryps War, the two Neo Zeon wars. As he looked at the boring timeline, Banagher couldn't get rid of those jade green eyes spinning in his dizzy mind.

The bright eyes he saw several hours ago; the soft touch when he hugged her together with both hands; everything just felt so distant, so vague that it feels like he was seeing another person's memory. Even Banagher himself couldn't dare to believe that he stole a mini mobile suit to save her. He didn't think that he would have such a reckless impulse. Why did he do this? Who was she?

As it was close to noon, there was a bright sunlight outside the classroom window. At the field in front of the vocation building, there were mini mobile suits that were used for training lined up over there, moving equipment that's to be used for training. Opposite there was a stack of trapezoid layers of the school campus that was designed with the Coriolis' Effect of the colony's self-rotation in mind. And far over on the other side, there's a large wall that showed the end of a space colony—the materials were still exposed to the airtight wall facing the moon. As it was blocked

by the light of the artificial sun, it's import to see the entire mortar-like war, but there's a hatch in the center that's connected to the colony builder, and right now, there should be equipment that's to be used for building colonies that's being moved in and out.

The colony builder collects the debris that's floating around in the Dark Wasteland region and start to purify, refine and build << Industrial 7>>. That's the redevelopment plan of the Dark Wasteland region, often called the experimental phase of the ' Frontier Project'. In other words, this colony was built from the debris of past wars, and the colony builder was a magic funnel that uses this junk to build a 'world'—and because of the shape, this large facility was given the nickname <<Snail>>. Banagher couldn' t help but concentrate on this seemingly blurry airtight wall.

That was the thing that built the space colony, this 'world'. She said that she had to go there, that there's someone she had to meet. For what? To prevent a war?

"After the war, organizations that called themselves the remnants of Zeon created lots of conflict. They called for space migrants to be self-independent, pushed for Ere-ism, and viewed Earthnoids as enemies. However, don't forget the Newtype thinking in the republic that maybe people saw. That's why colonies and meteors were thrown down to Earth. It's unknown how many people sacrificed their lives because of this, and as citizens of the Federation who follow the idea of democracy, we… "

Another voice rang through his ears, covering the voice of Mr Bancroft who sounded more and more agitated. *"How spineless…!" Who cares about you,* Banagher argued back at the girl in his mind.

It has nothing to do with me. No, I can't possibly be involved in this. Whether it's this One Year War or the second Neo Zeon War 3 years ago—the so-called 'Char's Counterattack', all these has nothing to do with me. That's just something I only saw through the television screen, what happened in a far away world. It's the same for all the students here and Mr Bancroft here too!

If there were countless billions of people who were sacrificed in the war , then including those that survived, it's our job to rebuild Earth and develop. The commotion during the One Year War brought about the unification, and babies who were born after the war like Banagher grew up listening to these adults. Thus, even if there's people trying to start a space migrant independence or even start a large scale war because of this, it basically has nothing to do with them. It's only that they would feel uneasy about hearing that some colony got wrecked because of war, but one could think that the chances of it was like being hit by a huge meteor. They were too unlucky, and could just treat it as other people's business and forget about this. Movements of independence were just what people who to vent their depression as they weren't able to get used to society. The stand that 'lucky children who don't know about war' will never change, and it's undoubted that tomorrow would be the same as today.

That girl was about the same age as he was, but the war she said 'war' had a different force from what the teacher said. It's like a

membrane covering a greenhouse breaking apart, and a strong gust of wind blew in. it's also like a black spot that appears in an overly bright space, and then the shadow of the entire world appeared—

"Our company allows every factory to be independent financially. Thus, a group of uncouth people accepted the orders from Neo Zeon, causing both ally and enemy to have machines made from Anaheim. Thus, people would view Anaheim as death merchants. However, do not forget that the people in charge will be punished too…"

Then, I, who's attending Anaheim Electronics Industrial College , am already part of war. Thinking about this thing that he had never thought about before, Banagher's brain suddenly remembered the pure white color of the mobile suit he saw this morning outside the subway train window, and felt bothered by his far-fetched thinking.

The unicorn that cut through the vacuum dragged its white afterimage of its mobile suit like it was soaring in space. It flew towards the <<Snail>>, the creator of this world, the place where the colony builder was at, where normal people were forbidden from entering. If that girl was correct, that place would be the most critical place where the 'war' will be associated with.

Something was about to happen. No, maybe it had already happen, it's just that he only saw part of it. it's like a curtain was drawn right in front of his eyes. Banagher again looked outside the

window, saw the airtight wall that was filled with an unknown thing, and felt something in his heart throbbing. Mr Bancroft's voice that was becoming more excited moved the air.

"4 years late, in Universal Century year 100, the Republic of Zeon shall give up on its self-independence and will be drafted back into the Federation as Side 3. When the country in the name of Zeon is destroyed, Zeonism shall fall, and humanity will be united again. Just like how our grandfathers or fathers continued to exist for Earth and humanity to create this united government called this Earth Federation after so many tribulations. To inherit such a great legacy and let the Earth Celestial Sphere continue to develop, you young ones…"

Part 5

"Idiot, treating such words as well. That girl must be someone who's enthusiastic about activity, thinking that the capitalist Earth is all evil and sort. That's why she must be going over to Chairman Cardeas Vist."

Puffing her slightly brown face, Micott Bartsch simply said. Banagher kicked aside Haro lightly while it was shouting 'idiot, idiot', and uneasily drank up his remaining coffee.

Studying in the private high school beside Anaheim Electronics, Micott's dress code and verbal mannerisms were all a lot more free than the vocational school, and she wouldn't even hesitate about entering other people's schools. She came over to the vocation

school to discuss about the night's party during lunch break, and while Banagher tried to explain what happened in the morning, that was the answer she got.

The reality the girl said was the best weapon to deal with a boy who wanted to do something and was being all pumped up. Dressed in a hooded coat and shorts, Micott raised her leg as she sat on the bench, and Banagher avoided her gaze and said, "The chairman, as in, our vocation school?" he tried to avoid the thought that this may be true, and anyway, even if there was nothing he could say, he had to find something to say.

"That's right. There's a photo when you entered the school, right? Cardeas Vist, the largest stakeholder of Anaheim Electronics , also known as the second generation leader of the Vist Foundation that was the secret owner."

"That person lives inside the <<Snail>>?"

That girl said that there was 'someone she had to meet no matter what'. On hearing the term 'secret owner', Banagher's heart started to pulsate. However…

"Idiot, how could such a big hotshot stay in such a rural space colony? The chairman's just a title to him. He never even appeared in the graduation ceremonies before."

Sitting beside Micott, Takuya put down the magazine he read halfway through and interrupted. That was the robot related monthly magazine he would regularly buy, and there was a photo of a mini mobile suit tournament on the cross-pages picture.

"But it seemed that he really has a house here! It's said that the house was directly moved over from Earth. Even the <<Snail>> was said to be Vist Foundation's property."

Micott's father was the factory owner of the 3rd Industrial area, so she would often hear about such underground news. The factory owner over here in <<Industrial 7>> could be said to be like a mayor in the States, and even though Micott was a rich princess who's studying in a private school, she would continue to come over to this vocation school where the smell of grease was thick. Maybe its because this space colony was supported by the industry. She herself even said that 'the boys in our school are boring, all spineless princes'.

"But isn't the colony builder managed by the colony builder management? Why is it that there's rumors of it being the Foundation's personal property?"

"That's because the colony builder management had some members of the Vist Foundation, right?"

"The rich ones are really different. Launching an entire house into space, that's crazy."

Takuya looked like he didn't have any other thoughts as he said what he wanted and continued to read his magazine. An open secret's really scary, so scary that it can numb a person's sense for the strange, Banagher thought. However, he himself never heard of the name of Vist Foundation. Was it because he was transferred in midway through, or was it that he was too dazed for a long time ? Banagher really couldn't tell which was the reason, and he

looked through the trees in the school as he wondered what happened to the girl.

Anaheim Electronics wasn't just the largest military producer in the Earth Celestial sphere, but there's a house for the sponsor in the <<Snail>>. It's no wonder that the crazy radicals will rush in to kill just to oppose war. In fact, there's a lot of terror attacks on Anaheim every way, and it's said that there's a lot of expenses on safety. Even if the chairman of the Institute was just an open title, even Micott knew about the relationship between the Vist Foundation and Anaheim. It's likely that this leader may be attacked.

However, the girl's eyes made Banagher feel that things weren't that simple. She had a strong will, but those eyes weren't the eyes of a fanatic. It's different from all the people he met till now. Those jade-green eyes had a strong allure to them—

"The police's looking for her? You better not get involved with this. If the army gets hold on this, you might not even have a job."

Perhaps reading through his own thoughts, Micott said the absolute truth and ended the current conversation before looking over at Takuya. "Speaking of which, tonight's party…" Banagher wasn't interested in this topic and took Haro away before leaving.

Do you think I don't know about all of this? On one hand, he felt really angry, but on the other hand, his rationale side had to admit that Micott was right. His emotions that were being built up inside was forming a vortex inside him. It's better not to get involved with her, and I know that. At the police's side, he may be

questioned hard by the police, and also by those executives in suits . Most likely, they would be public security personnel. *If they're eyeing me, my path to Anaheim will always be closed, and I may even be expelled from school and return back to the old colony of Side 1.*

The old city Banagher grew up in was the first of the space colonies that were built, and was at a corner where it was past its durability use. Other than old residents, there were refugees from war, people with unemployment and frustrated activists who were practically useless and had to rely on others. It was a small town where the circumstances were really bad, where the public drainage were often so bad that stench would always come out from it. Both mother and son seemed like they were fleeing from the sights of the world as they moved to his hometown, and it was the best place to live in for someone with no place to go. He also had the money his mother left behind, and he should be able to continue living on. However, there's no future in that town.

Then, what about here? He intended to continue relying on this father of his who he had never met before and join the bottom rungs of the enterprise, but there wasn't anything really different, nothing that he hasn't seen. He didn't have a goal, had no interests , and just felt 'disjointed' as the days pass. Does this mean that he had no future—he continued to be pressured by the swirling thoughts, and just when he quickly moved past the door, he heard a clear and refreshing voice "Are you Banagher Links?". Banagher stopped.

There was an electric car parked on the road in front of the school gate, and a woman was standing right in front of it. The woman was wearing a fitting coat and tight skirt, and her long hair

was tied behind her. She lifted her head and straightened her back, and one could tell from afar that she had a good figure that resembled a secretary of a large company. However, her face that didn't have any make up made her look younger. Even though one could feel that she would fit into the school with just her appearance, the impression would change when they look into her eyes.

The emotionless blue eyes made it hard to tell whether she was focusing on him. The dark blue eyes that would remind one of the deep seas on earth made it look like there were two holes in front of her eyes. Banagher started to have goosebumps and picked Haro up from beside his feet. At this moment, the woman passed through the gate and said "that's good. I have a question I want to ask you" as she approached. She was wearing a business suit, but Banagher realized that she was wearing sports shoes underneath.

"Can you please tell me what did the person you saved this morning say?"

The woman merely showed a smile, and behind her, two men got off the electric car. Both of them were dressed really casually, but their expressions and looks didn't look friendly at all. Banagher felt that his hands which were holding onto Haro were sweating and asked back, "Are you the police?" The media didn't reveal his name, and these people didn't look like reporters. That robotic smile the woman gave didn't change as she answered with silence.

Banagher felt that the air around him went cold as his knees were trembling. Something's not right with these people. They had

the same stench as of those frustrated activists in his hometown—those who were already used to violence. He looked away and backed off, “I told all I should say to the police.” He quickly said that and wanted to get back into the school. Immediately, his shoulder was grabbed from behind, and the foot that was about to step out missed the ground.

“Just say the same thing you said to them. We won’t do anything else then.”

The hand that was grabbing onto the shoulder didn’t let go as her blue eyes closed in while she continued on. The force wasn’t great, but his body still couldn’t move. It felt like he would be taken down if he tried to struggle. Banagher just felt that this action was of someone who was extremely skilled and forced out a hoarse voice, “What do you mean by that…” and the woman whispered to him, “You don’t want to be involved in trouble, right ?” and exerted even more strength in her grip.

There was a sharp pain in his neck, and he let out a cry before he could endure it. His upper body couldn’t help but twist, and Haro dropped off his numbed fingertips. Banagher couldn’t breathe normally as he moved the only free eye. There weren’t any students nearby, and there weren’t any signs of the old guard beside the gate. These two men were standing behind the woman and creating a blind spot. He wanted to cry out, but his abdomen couldn’t exert force, and he could only let his sights move about before seeing those blue eyes again.

It was killing intent. The term that matched her blue hole-like eyes accompanied this chilling fact as it went down Banagher’s

body. Unlike those activists who lost their way, these men were professional. They knew how to wreck a human body, they were soldiers—people who would use violence without hesitation if necessary. Just when he thought about this, he heard the woman say "Where did 'she' go?" Banagher inadvertently said out carelessly "The <<Snail>>…"

"The <<Snail>>?" the woman asked back as she exerted even more force. The pain that was added on struck Banagher as he answered, "The, the colony builder!"

"She said that she had someone she wanted to meet and talk with…"

He spoke too much. Just when Banagher felt that despair the moment he let out his voice, the pain suddenly vanished, and his body that regained its freedom took a few steps back. Banagher finally managed to support his knees and turned over to look at the woman who had already turned around. The two men who followed her from behind quickly left the school gate as if they weren't looking at Banagher at all.

"You can't possibly get over to the <<Snail>>…! It's forbidden there. There's also construction areas all around. You can't even get over there!"

Banagher held his aching shoulder and shouted out unhappily. The woman stopped, and the beige hair that had a bit of orange was moved by the wind as she used those emotionless blue eyes to stare at Banagher.

"I'll remember that. Thank you, Banagher-kun."

It was a tone that was without compassion nor arrogance, which made Banagher feel all the more humiliated. The woman just took the electric car and left with the men. Banagher used his last ounce of courage to run out of the school gate and glared at the electric car that was gradually moving away. The electric car took a turn at the road beside the school and immediately went missing. Obviously, they were headed towards the Industrial area.

That girl was chased by people, and they weren't the people—but more like guerillas who were like soldiers. "A war will happen." "There's still time" to stop it." voices like this accompanied the weight of the current situation as they echoed in his head. However, Banagher didn't think of what to do at this moment. He felt even more guilty that he succumbed to violence and let out these words.

Having stayed in the old city that was like a slum, Banagher developed a resistance to violence. He had a belief that if he had to fight or hide, he would be stronger than an ordinary boy. But the fact was that right now, he was no different from a child. He just said everything out just to avoid pain. He knew that this would bring about danger to the girl, but he couldn't even muster a lie in his mind—no, he was just that spineless.

"I'm really…weak."

He remembered those jade green eyes that had some anxiety in them. 'How spineless'. The words echoed in his heart. Banagher gripped his fists hard and couldn't help but run out.

At this moment, he didn't even have the rationale mindset to think about his future as his body went hot from the impulse of trying to make up for his own mistake. Banagher and Haro, which caught up, went to the nearest electric car park.

Part 6

Having come all the way here, one would really feel that Industrial 7 was really a space colony that was being built.

The block that was completed was only 20km long, and right in front of it was the colony builder unit <<Wheels>>, and the inside was 3.2km long and 1.6km wide. The construction area was divided into 4 parts. One of the land cabled structure has 4 territorial blocks that's being built, and these were lined together without much any bumps. There're 6 of these land cable structures that surround all 360 degrees on the inside of the wall of the space colony. This scene itself wasn't just a congruent sight itself, but one would realize that if they peel off this foil of artificial earth, they would just be living in a cylinder. It's a barren and lonely sight.

For the past 10 years, she had been to many places, including Earth, but she had never seen a space colony that was being built on the inside. As she stood in front of wire mesh that separated her from inside, the girl didn't look bored as she looked at the large builder unit. The large unit builder was a large metal frame that was about the same as the area block. The lines that run on the rail were moving about, fastening the area block that was under construction, and the fully automatic machines will finish off the area blocks that they were supposed to construct. Simply put,

these were extremely large industrial machines, the basis of the land making process.

Based on the information on the mesh wire, a construction would take about a week. The first construction will move onto the second one, and the second one will move onto the third one. It will move all the lines on the area blocks to be completed systematically as it progresses, and it will move back once the fourth construction was complete to the first construction. This was the day when the final construction will be completed, and the other side of the wire mesh look busy. Work vehicles and cars with supervising civil servants would move about to and fro. Once the construction group back off, a new 'land' will be completed, so the district office itself would be busy. They had to check the name of the area according to the city's plan, and also check the electric cables and the underground sewage. There were a whole lot of things they had to do.

The land builder units would back away in all 6 lines and return back to the start. The wheel itself would back away too. In other words, the colony will increase in length by 1.6km. At that time, the colony itself would let a siren and get ready for a slight tremor that would coming with the growth. However, what would be the scene of 6 builder units rolling at the same time when they're more than 3km long and about the height of 25 levels? Just thinking about it alone made it exciting, but right now, the current situation wouldn't allow for her to sightsee leisurely. She looked away from the high builder unit and looked at the construction gate that's between the wire mesh fence.

Though there were guards, the security wasn't strict. Maybe vehicles could sneak in here. However, there was a problem. She didn't know what the builder unit looked like, and even if she passed through it, there were still 3 blocks of area blocks that were under construction. She didn't feel that she could walk 6km into this construction area without being discovered, and especially when there was the commotion this morning, it's likely that the police may be watching them.

The girl looked up at the artificial sun that was shining through the clouds. She wondered if she could walk over through there. It's impossible to see from here when the land builder was blocking, but the artificial sun that passes through the space colony would extend out to the airtight wall on the other side where the moon was, and it would form part of the basis of the gantry linking to the colony builder. The gantry would often let out construction materials and dust as cranes would then move these materials to the construction site. Thus, it should be easy to sneak in through the artificial sun.

And since this path is inaccessible, she could only move through the construction area if she wanted to get near the colony builder. The girl again looked at the gate of the construction site. As she noticed the cars and the guards who were busy dealing with them, *kyururu*…her stomach rumbled.

She immediately looked around. Luckily, there wasn't anyone nearby. Even if there were though, the sounds of car moving through would overpower it so much that it couldn't be heard. However, she still felt herself blushing unknowingly. The girl hasn

't ate for more than half a day, and wondered how she was actually able to be hungry at this moment. But on the other hand, she could understand the importance of eating. The girl sighed. She should have taken some dry food when she left the Garancieres, but it's now too late to regret about this.

She was thirsty too, and in this situation, her concentration will drop. Also, it'll be easy for someone to spot her when she remain at the same place for a long time. The girl left the scene and head towards the Industrial area in the street construction block. On the way, she went by a large trailer that had lots of mini mobile suits on, which caused her face to be covered with dust that flew off the road. At this moment, she suddenly remembered about that boy she met in the morning, his presence.

The boy who desperately reached his hand out of the mobile suit cockpit to save her life while she was floating in the air seemed to be an ordinary citizen. *Why was he able to do that? What happened to him after that? I should have at least thanked him…*

Part 7

To ease the stress of being hidden in a sealed space, the space colony had routes that were designed to be part of the city's plan. One of them was the commercial area that was right beside the construction area. The thin and long path had shops littered on both sides of the road, and each of the shops were set up to their ideal image, causing the street to look like those remaining shopping streets in those old cities on Earth. The back of the short

roofs had builder units that were like hills, and clouds that covered the airtight wall facing the moon. The area just felt like a rural town.

It was 1pm, and all the eateries were no longer packed with workers. The shopping streets entered a time of relaxation. She snuck in between some old people and some housewives with children and continued walking down the street. There were bakeries, bookstores, customer service shops and eateries. At times , there would be the smell of hot dogs or oily Chinese food coming out from the messy row of streets. Though she could drink from the water cooler in the park when she's thirsty, her empty stomach couldn't be filled, and if she let her guard down, it would rumble again, which would make it embarrassing.

However, she was more worried about the housewives who were walking by and glancing at her. She had firm belief that she wasn't caught on camera by the port's surveillance camera, so nobody would suspect that she was the one involved in the incident this morning. Or maybe her clothing was rather strange for the people here? She checked on the internet for the latest fashion trend before she left for Palau and tried her best not to choose the most outstanding on. As she looked at herself through a glass window on a cupboard in a shop, the girl wondered whether it was because she buttoned up her collar. However, she didn't want to opened her collar so randomly, so she started working again.

She made preparations before, but there would be lots of trouble when it came to reality. To her, who never carried money or credit cards before, she didn't know that she couldn't buy bread

without having money as it was not part of her knowledge. Thus, she made the mistake of running out without taking the money. I really don't understand social rules—the girl thought as she felt even more depressed. She had no experience of going out alone. Speaking of which, she did watch a romantic movie about a princess in a small country who slipped out onto the streets for a day of happiness. It was an old century film. The story was ordinary, but the actress who acted as a princess who did not know anything was really charismatic, and it was a movie she really liked. What was the name of that actress?

Thinking about it hard, the girl suddenly realized that she was seriously thinking of the actress' name. She abandoned the useless dream behind her. The princess in the movie was just leaving a boring duty, but she had something she had to do. Ever since they knew that she was opposed to this deal, Zinnerman didn't reveal anything more about this deal to her. Thus, she wasn't certain when the interaction with Vist Foundation would be held, and where. However, some of the other crew members said that it would begin at evening, and it'll be too slow for her if she continued to laze around. Palau should have found out that she was missing. She had to be faster—the girl left the shopping street, entered a complicated alley, and found a van parked in a dead end .

She looked at the van that was filled with metal filings, and thought that it would be impossible to get on. She then looked over at the driver's seat. She didn't want to use this method, but would it be possible to talk to the driver and let him help transport her into the construction area? She could say that she wanted to get closer to see the colony being built. If she's successful, she

could even get inside the area builder. If she could get in and understand the rough situation…

Suddenly, she felt a stare from behind. It's like someone who had been prone suddenly lifting its face, a stare that was full of intent. Her body unknowingly tensed up, but she didn't make the mistake of turning around carefully. The girl quickly turned around a corner, but there was a man who blocked his way on the alley, causing her to stop.

The man was dressed in a short coat, and his cap was kept low. The girl recognized his face. He was a member of the Garencieres. The girl intended to leave the alley before the man walked over, but two people were standing at the exit of the alley, blocking her escape.

The exhaust fan from the restaurant pumped out greasy smoke, and the alley only had dirty trash bins fallen about as there was no one else around. Knowing that she had nowhere to go, the girl hid her uneasy feeling as she faced the two people who blocked her getaway. She didn't think of why she was discovered. She knew that the crew of the Garancieres could do this.

And if Marida joined in the search—the girl pulled about 3m away as she stared at Marida. Marida was wearing an office suit as a disguise, yet it couldn't hide her ominous presence. The girl knew that she would be immediately caught at such a distance, and used her eyes to tell her not to be rude. Marida's expression showed a shift, and one could tell that she was wavering,

"Let's head back, princess."

Heading that little wavering in her, Marida said, “The captain’s worried about you.”

“I don’t want to.”

“Please consider your position. If you’re discovered by the Federation at such a place, who knows what would happen…”

She stepped forward while wearing the sports shoes. Even if the disguise wasn’t perfect, it’s really Marida’s style not to wear high heels. “It’s because I thought of this that I did it.” The girl used a tone that fit her ‘position’ and prevented Marida from moving forward.

“Right now, we can’t use the ‘Laplace Box’. No matter what kind of thing it is, Full Frontal will only use it as a tool and start a meaningless conflict. You should know that, right?”

“I don’t understand. I just listen to orders.”

“You’re lying. You’re just escaping. The ‘power’ that was given to you normally wouldn’t be used in such a place.”

The girl didn’t just say this randomly. Marida, who would blindly listen to Zinnerman’s orders and never faced her own life—showed wavering in her blue eyes again and looked away from the girl, but the ominous presence on her body didn’t subside . Marida recollected her expressionless look as she looked over, “ Princess…pardon me for my rudeness.”

With such a signal, the crew member standing behind put his hand on the girl's shoulder. He did control his strength, the skilled move wasn't something that could be shaken off whenever anyone wanted to. The girl saw Marida and the other crew member close in and shouted, "How rude! Let go of me!" as she continued to struggle. At this moment, a loud alarm suddenly rang throughout the entire alley.

The sound was so loud that it probably didn't just ring through the alley, but also possibly through the road. Even Marida was stunned as she looked around. The girl saw the crew member beside her reach for a gun in his chest, and the force on her shoulder was weakened. She used this chance to struggle hard and escaped from his grasped.

The girl dodged past the hand Marida reached out for the first time and went around the corner. Amidst the siren, she could hear Marida call out "Princess…!". However, the girl continued to run. She turned around several corners, went through a narrow alley, and was aiming for a main street with people on. However, the girl soon lost her way, and as she looked around at a crossroad, someone suddenly grabbed her on the wrist from beside her.

The soft hand was different from Marida and the rest. The familiar feeling appeared through the girl's mind as she even forgot to struggle and looked at the owner of the hand. That was the face of the person who saved her from impasse.

The head that was full of sweat and the dark brown eyes were staring at the girl's eyes. Why…? The girl thought, and then heard

the boy's shout, "Over here!" The girl was pulled away by the hand. She ran from behind, and the ball-shaped robot beside the foot started to roll. The noisy alarm suddenly stopped. It seemed that this mascot-like robot was the one that made the sound.

The boy pulled the girl along in this narrow alley and continued to run through complicated alleys without hesitation. The girl was certain that he was that boy through the robot and the deep blue jacket in front of him, and continued to follow him and run. It may be careless for her to follow a stranger, but right now, she couldn't allow herself to be caught by Marida. The boy who seems familiar with this place is leading, so let's have him lead. The girl continued to run between the gaps of the packed houses.

Also, the hands of this boy were easing themselves to prevent hurting her and yet grabbing tightly so and not letting go. She was helped by a lot of hands before, but the girl never grabbed such a hand that grabbed onto hers firmly and without hesitation. It was unexpectedly soft too; it had the weakness of age as it was tightly sticking to her skin.

I was saved by these hands twice. Who is this boy? At this moment, the girl forgot that she was being pursued and seriously looked at the back of the boy.

Part 8

The self-defense alarm system inside Haro actually worked in such an unexpected manner. While sweating and holding onto the girl's hand, Banagher moved through the alleys of the shopping area.

Banagher didn't come to the construction site only one or twice, so he had roughly remembered the entire place. He just needed to head over to the distribution center to compare the vehicle license plate that terrifying woman and the rest used and confirm their location. It wouldn't be too difficult for him to take the initiative. Banagher intended to use the complicated alleys to shake off their pursuers, that is, if they weren't caught in the process.

He first heard the breath of the girl behind her. Then, it was Haro, who was bouncing like a ball as its body was of strengthened plastic with an enhanced layer of rubber. Haro used the spring inside its frame to jump, and as the center maintains the movement, it couldn't turn right immediately. After turning around a few times, Banagher picked up Haro, put it in a gap that' s 50cm wide between two houses, and used his expression to call the girl over. He thought that she would hesitate for a while, but the girl actually followed Banagher and entered the gap.

The gap was so small that he had to tilt himself sideways just to walk through. After walking through it, they used the piled up garbage for footing to climb up the walls. Then, they continued to move down through a corridor in the air near the roofs. A granny who was watching television inside a window turned around in surprise. A stray cat was scared away by this sudden intruder, and someone angrily shouted, "WHO'S THAT BRAT!" While stepping on the cheap plastic roofs, Banagher continued leap off them, and the girl nimbly followed him as her purple shawl fluttered with the wind.

After moving for about 20m, the rows of roofs vanished, and a large space appeared in front of them. They arrived at the boundary of the commercial area and the industrial area. Normally speaking, the area was a road, but the houses here were built towards the wired fence. This was a screen that couldn't be seen unless one deliberately look from the 'wide space' where there's deliberately no set up. Banagher checked that he reached the end of the cable like as planned, looked at the colony builder units that' s several hundred meters in front of him, and again turned to look at the landscape from a height of about 3 levels.

There's a small pile of dirt beside the fence, and there's no construction worker. Thinking about this, Banagher thought that this would be faster than climbing down the fence and turned to look at the girl. But before he could ask whether they should jump, the girl's determined look was facing him as she jumped onto the pile of dirt. I lost to her…Banagher thought and carried Haro before jumping.

Banagher's feet landed into the soft dirt and beside the girl. He climbed out from the pile of dirt that was at his chest level, spit out the dirt that entered his mouth, and saw that the girl who had already climbed out from here and slid down. They ran for a long distance, and those who don't know the landscape wouldn't know such a path. Banagher wanted to take a short breath and called the girl "Oi…", but the girl stared sharply back and him and shouted, "HURRY UP!"

"MARIDA WILL CATCH UP TO US LIKE THIS!"

The girl's jade-green eyes showed anxiety. It was really the expression of that girl. "Marida, as in that scary big sister?" The girl angrily growled back without answering Banagher's question, "Hurry up!" and started to run off. Banagher climbed out from the pile of dirt and hurriedly followed behind.

He grabbed the hand of the girl who was intending to run to the outside of the builder area, said "Over here" and was about to pull her back, but immediately felt the girl gasp. He looked over at where she was looking at, and found that it was the woman who went through the residential area and was standing on the layers of overlapping roofs. The pretty-looking woman called Marida was looking over. Her blue eyes narrowed to a fine line. The next moment, the feet with sports shoes on them stamped onto the ground, and the hair that was tied into a ponytail fluttered. The body easily leaped past the metal wire and the pile of dirt as she landed on the ground.

She was as nimble as a cat. "No way…" Banagher couldn't believe it, and the girl grabbed his hand, shouting, "HURRY UP AND RUN!" Banagher pulled her hand and ran towards the builder unit. The pyramid-like large monorail track and the structure was like a hill. On seeing this structure that was so large that it occupied their line of sight, they ran to a workyard with construction materials and mini mobile suits.

"What should we do?"

"YOU WANT TO GET OVER TO THE 'SNAIL', RIGHT?"

Banagher roared as he answered the girl and saw the crowd that was scattering in front of the builder unit like ants. It's about time for the colony to expand and the creation of new land. They were already moving through the workers that were moving back, and one of them who looked like the worker head shouted, "Oi! Who are you!" Banagher went by the man and got near to a slope near the monomial stop. Looking back, he saw Marida easily pushing aside the workers who were coming over, and they were less than 20m away. Banagher's idea to stand up and adjust his breathing was gone as he desperately ran up the slope.

The mobile rail of the builder units—the monorail was located at a place 1.5 times the height of the units away, but 170m high. The construct that looked like a triangle from the front was set in front of both sides of the builder. And at the start, or the end, there 's a builder unit linked to the slope used for transportation. Banagher was climbing up this slope. In other words, if he continued to run up this slope to the top, he would reach the ceiling of the builder unit.

The ceiling was 25 levels high from the builder, and there're another few levels to the link point of the monorail. It's a slope where a cart could move, but it would be really tiring to run up about several hundred meters at one go. He panted quite a few times, but on the way there, his feet started to feel lighter, and it felt like the muscles on his waist seemed to be floating from his bones. That's because the further he was from the ground—the further off from the inside of the colony made the centrifuge force weaker.

There's no high-rise buildings inside the space colony, and one could tell that the centrifuge force could only be used for a height of about 5,6 levels. The higher he climbed, the more his body felt the weakening of gravity. Banagher felt that such physics laws was really useful for the first time as his running motion was like long jumping continuously. However, it would be the same for the pursuer ass well. Marida kicked the slope with much more leg power and suddenly accelerated. Her hand reached the back of the girl, and only missed her shoulder by inches. However, she didn't mess up her rhythm as she continued to pull her distance close. She was just like a machine that didn't know fatigue. *We can't run away, we'll be caught in the next second.* Getting ready for this, Banagher suddenly heard a deep-sounding alarm.

At the same time, the warning lights on both sides of the slope rang, and a slow tremor went through their legs. Banagher used all his strength to move his legs and pulled the girl over at him. Because of the tremor, Marida's feet became slower, and the link to

the slope was being dragged up, turning a straight lane to a 2m tall wall. Banagher shouted: “Jump!” and leaped at the wall that’s rising.

Shaking off the gravity that was less than half of usual, both of them jumped with Haro, and their fingertips reached the edge of the wall. Banagher grabbed the rising wall, and the girl did the same too, but her fingers nearly slipped. Banagher grabbed the girl ’s hand and climbed the wall. They didn’t stop rising, but they saw Marida, who couldn’t jump in time, slowly becomg slower.

The builder unit was starting to move. The builder unit that was stuck on the new block of land rose up the monorail by 170m. It moved into the moving circuit before starting to move horizontally . The unit just moved though the builder circuit and retreated back to the airtight wall facing the moon before starting to work from the first construction area.

Banagher checked that the girl and Haro were both fine, and for a short while, didn’t have the strength to move a he looked at the landscape that was getting further and further away. Marida continued to remain on the broken slope as she looked over. There’ s no anger or disappointment in her eyes, just eyes that were as empty as a cave.

Part 9

All the gates would be closed when they’re moving. Thus, nobody could enter the inside of the builder unit. Both of them dragged their tired legs and continued moving up the remaining part of the slope before reaching the top part of the builder unit.

Right in front of their eyes was a hilly region that was composed of metal frames that was tilted towards the inside, creating a gradual gradient of materials that extend far beyond. This size wasn't to be described with a number of football fields, but one that could accommodate the entire city.

Banagher spread his limbs out wide on the floor of the passage linking both frames. He felt like he was lying on the clouds, most likely because he felt that gravity was weakened. The girl sat beside him, and both of them spent a little time regaining their breaths. The builder unit was already starting to move, and the breeze that gently blew by felt refreshing on the sweaty body.

"We can ride on this to the airtight wall near the moon. We can get close to the 'Snail'…the hatch of the space colony builder, but I don't know whether we can get in."

Having finally adjusted his breathing, Banagher said this, and the girl merely answered softly, "Is that so…" without even looking back. Her voice sounded drastically different like she couldn't even keep up with the sudden changes around her, and she had already used up all her strength just looking around.

"My name's Banagher, Banagher Links. What's yours?"

Banagher sat up, wanting to catch the girl's attention. The girl let out an "eh?" and exchanged looks with Banagher, but immediately averted her eyes and said softly, "Erm, I'm called Audrey Burne…"

Audrey. Banagher felt that this was a nice name, but he didn't have the courage to say it out, and looked away unnaturally. Haro instead came in between them and shouted, "Haro Haro" as it fawned around. The girl's tense expression became relaxed somewhat as she reached her hands out to grab Haro.

The first time he saw her smile, Banagher had a strange feeling that the artificial sun got brighter, and then told her, "It's Haro." But Audrey gave him a puzzled look.

"Don't you know? This is a souvenir robot made by the ace pilot of the war. It's rather popular when you were young, right?"

"No idea, I've been living in the countryside."

Which countryside? Banagher looked at her face that was becoming more earnest and wanted to ask more, but Audrey's smile suddenly vanished as she asked, "Why did you save me?" Having been asked this, Banagher was at a loss of words.

"That's because…I don't want people to call me spineless."

Actually, it's because I was unhappy that I was threatened by that big sister…he didn't want to say this, and he felt that it wasn't just that too. However, Audrey frowned and looked aside. Right now, her confused mental state was full of doubts. Seeing her without any response at all, Banagher said, "That, that's what you said!"

"Me?"

"Yeah. I was then caught by the police. And I met that scary big sister when I went back to school…"

"Then, you followed Marida and the others?"

Interrupting the misunderstood explanation, Audrey stared at his eyes and said. Just when Banagher was left speechless by her fast understanding, her clear jade-colored eyes shook, and her expression because gentle after understanding what happened. She suddenly blurted out a 'sorry', which stunned Banagher.

"If I told you off for being spineless, I'll take that back. It seemed that I misunderstood you."

"Misunderstood?"

"Misunderstood you for being a person trapped in your own little world."

Such unrestrained words caused Banagher to be stunned. He stared at Audrey's face, who in turn looked like she didn't say anything wrong, and again felt unhappy for being hit on the sore point before shouting shrilling, "EVERYONE'S LIKE THAT!"

"Everyone's been living in such an exaggerated cylinder. Can't that do?"

"That's not it. I apologize if my words do sound scathing… because I have never experienced such a life before."

That somewhat shocked look on her face looked like she had never expected her words to hurt other people, and she looked like

a strange creature who lived in a completely different habitat. Banagher asked in disappointment, "Are you some rich princess or something?" Audrey herself smiled as she answered,

"A duckweed floating about. That's how I was born like."

Her gaze turned to the builder unit that was moving on the lane beside them and said in a self-mocking manner. Banagher secretly glanced at her somewhat lonely looking face, and felt that she was someone who he could get along with, and said, "Is that so…then I 'm the same too." Audrey didn't answer as the artificial sun that seemed to have gone brighter shone on the duo's head.

The builder would spend about 30 minutes to retreat completely from the builder cable that's more than 6km long and would dock at the airtight wall facing the moon. During this time, both of them cautiously moved through the wide roof and moved to the other side of the builder unit. It was on both sides of the roof , but the distance was about 1.6km. Once they finished walking, the builder unit had finished moving.

They were only moving about 20km per hour on the builder cable, but the wind that blew by was exceptionally strong too. Banagher let Audrey move in front and carried Haro as he followed from behind silently. This is in case Audrey was about to fall off in the wind, but even in low gravity, her body wasn't blown away by the wind. The cabled rail didn't let out any sounds of tremor as only the wind surrounded both of them.

"Who were your pursuers?"

After going through half of the roof, Banagher asked. This was the one question that appeared in his heart amongst the pile of questions.

"My allies. I escaped from them."

The wind blew Audrey's brown short hair as she casually sad. Banagher remembered what Micott said and tentatively said, "Are you an activist or something?"

"Activist?"

"Those that oppose the Federation or want the independence of spacenoids or something…"

"…Yeah. That's sort of correct, but it may be scarier than what you think."

Looking up at the airtight room where blocked her path, Audrey gave a wry smile. It's unknown whether that expression was either to mock Banagher's foolishness or herself. Banagher felt that a war that far exceeded his expectations was about to start and swallowed his saliva. He felt that he could be involved in it and lifted his head, and felt that his sweat and body went cold.

He looked up at the artificial sun that was gradually becoming yellow, and then looked at the watch which showed 2.15pm. He skipped all his lessons, and since it's vocational classes where everyone's split up, he couldn't print notes from Takuya. *What should I do? And I think I have to go to the principal's office after school* …Most likely, his mind subconsciously forgot about his fear, and

right now, he's thinking about all these things. Banagher looked back and saw a street behind it. That was a familiar street that included Anaheim Electronics Industrial College, and the road just looked like it realy faded.

"You said that there won't be any war, right?"

He turned to look at the girl's back in front of him and said cautiously. Audrey immediately stopped.

"You said that you have to meet someone to prevent a war from happening. That's…"

Suddenly, noise and tremors interrupted Banagher's words. Banagher was shocked and ran beside Audrey before looking in front.

With the builder unit moving back, the colony started to extend. The 'Wheel' that covered the outer wall moved, and 'Industrial 7' slowly became longer. Inside it, Banagher and Audrey saw the airtight wall facing the moon backing off as the inner wall that's sliced into a ring moved.

The cylinder that was 6.4km in diameter rumbled, and the airtight room and the gap between the inner wall of the ring gradually expanded. From between the expanding, through the first construction area that was under way and an area block that was only composed of frames, they could see the insider wall of the 'Wheel', and the 'landscape' of the colony that wasn't completed was shown outside. The 6 colony units that were moving back through the cabled rails will enter the gap together to

builder the outer wall of the colony, and then continue to move forward. It would continue to build the remaining area blocks in each construction area in order, creating new earth in the colony.

The earth rolled together with the ground, and the builder unit was trapped inside like a hill—this 'creation of the earth' seen was already a common sight to Banagher, but the majestic scene of this large movement would make anyone amazed no matter how many times he saw it. Audrey seemed to have the same feeling as she muttered, "Amazing…" she looked completely moved. The glow let out by the jade colored eyes seemed to show an expression a person of her age should have.

"Is this the first time you're seeing this?"

Audrey nodded as she answered Banagher's question, but her eyes couldn't leave the scene in front of her. The clouds that were moving, the airtight wall that was moving further, the base of the artificial sun that got expanded, and the temporary storeroom that was floating beside like a spaceship—

"The world's gradually becoming bigger…"

Audrey suddenly saud that. Her expression and thoughts weren't like a girl who's living in a path of Shura far beyond anyone's imagination. It was a voice filled with similar thoughts and values. The anxiety and terror immediately disappeared as Banagher smiled. He stood beside Audrey, who wasn't even aware of herself, and looked in front.

Unlike the faded streets behind, the brightness of the world in front of them obviously increased. Breathing the air of the 'world' that was just born, Banagher lifted his head and looked at the airtight wall with a metal bowl-shaped depression. At the base of it, the gate leading to the colony builder—the 'Snail' was covered in clouds, and they couldn't see it.

Part 10

The expansion work on the space colony resonated with a side of the colony builder. It was 2.30pm, and the <<Wheel>> finished moving. The 'Magallanica's retractable deck buzzed silently like how it was supposed to. However, this retractable deck of the << Magallanica>> could hold a battleship. As according to the nickname <<Snail>>, there's a snail shell riding on its back. It's more than 300m in diameter and 1km deep. This place was linked to the airtight wall facing the moon on Industrial 7, and was also the exit where building materials were moved. In that sense, it's more accurate to describe it as a small scale port.

In one of the areas, Cardeas Vist was watching the silent buzzing—the packaging of the RX-0 <<Unicorn>>. The white machine had more than ten personnel preparing it, sealing the hatch or sticking warning labels all over it. That's a common scene when exchanging goods, but the personnel realized that they weren't doing an orthodox handing-over and kept silent. They weren't using a normal mobile suit fixation unit but a special containment that's highly confined, which is another reason why

they were silent. The <<Unicorn>>, which was being packaged inside the box with spare parts and equipment, looked like a toy robot in a model shop. Or rather…a top secret machine in a box.

If there's a need to mention something different, it's that the manufacturer wouldn't accept refunds or repairs, which was why they put in a large number of repair parts and waste materials. The limbs were tied together to prevent the person using it from spoiling it immediately. However, Cardeas himself suspected whether this would be effective or not. If the 'Unicorn' were to go full power, such a level of restrain could be destroyed. The unique frame, capabilities and limits of this machine wasn't completely grasped too…

He thought about all these as he lifted his head to watch the beam rifle being dragged by a mini mobile suit. Gael wordlessly floated over to stand beside him. Seeing Gael move so fluidly under zero gravity and land on both feet, Cardeas wordlessly prompted him to state his intent.

"The second lift camera captured this footage just now."

Gael handed over some photos of a girl's face that was entering the cargo lift. Cardeas stared at the face that's slightly above, and gasped.

"…Why is 'she'…?"

"Not sure, but she's coming here. There's a report that said that there was an intruder that came in through the maintenance path of the artificial sun, but the identity and whereabouts were unknown. Maybe it's 'her'."

She had brown short hair and a taunting expression as it looked like she was deliberately exposing her face and looking up at the camera. If it was a disguise, it would be too brilliantly done. For 10 years, she had never shown a photo of herself. However, 3 years ago, Cardeas saw a photo of hers that the Federation intelligence managed to capture successfully. He could only admit that she was here.

But why was she here? After shuffling through several photos, Cardeas saw the other person who rode the elevator with 'her', and couldn't help but widen his eyes. A shock that was different from seeing 'her' face pierced through his heart, and he felt his own hand that's holding the photo shaking.

"What about this boy?"

"Seemed like her companion. A little too young to be an escort …"

At this moment, Gael stopped, having definitely sensed his shock. Cardeas used his utmost will to control the trembling in his hand and finished looking through the remaining photos.

The dark brown eyes inherited from his mother, and the slightly round face. It couldn't be a mistake. The 'tumor' in his life he kept till now actually appeared at such a moment, and with 'her'—

"Do we have contact with the 'Sleeves'?"

Cardeas spent 10 seconds just to let out a voice that didn't tremble as he asked while ignoring Gael's concernted look.

"No. But there's a little commotion in the construction area. There may be a mutiny too."

"So 'she's working on her own too…"

Considering the current situation with the sleeves, this isn't impossible, but the reason as to why 'she' came over wouldn't be enough to explain why the boy came with 'her'. His life had no involvement with the 'Sleeves' in the first place. What happened? What caused him to come here? Cardeas didn't want to talk about such 'private affairs' to the 'corporate' professional Gael as he continued to stare at the people in the photos.

"This may cause an obstruction to the transport of the 'Box'. Must I send her back?"

Gael said. Cardeas looked at his upright stare, and then lowered his head as he looked back at the photos. At this point, the word dilemma came to his mind.

Part 11

Once they took the lift down and went through the defenceless gantry gate, they entered the closest elevator. Another 1,500m down to their destination and it was the residential area of the colony builder.

This was the inner area that was on the inside of the 'Snail'. This residential area that had only half the diameter of the space colony had only half the gravity. Banagher and Audrey floated out from the elevator and entered the plains with very little gravity. The outside was a complete green, and there weren't any people around, and neither were there the sounds of vehicle or mini mobile suits moving. The relaxed voices of the birds was the only thing accompanying the air. This shrill and peaceful silence that would hurt the ears made it feel like a completely different world from the noisy industrial space colony.

Under the flat artificial sun that was illuminating the ceiling, the green pasture looked like it filled the entire inner wall. To the people who would only think that there was only the sight of industrial resource facilities and worker dormitories, this scene would be too unexpected. As the gravity was weaker, the grasses and trees were taller than those in the space colonies, but looked like they were properly trimmed, which made them look odd. This place had tectonic plates that were of an even smaller scale, and if one didn't look around, it would appear to be flat ground. This place also had a luxurious looking villa, and the fountain in the garden was still flowing with water. One would feel that the name 'colony builder' was a lie as what anyone would see was similar to a garden commonly seen in old-century houses of the nobility and the fabled tycoon's private land.

“Just like what Micott said...”

The structure of the Vist Foundation villa itself was moved directly from Earth. Banagher stared at the villa in an engrossed manner that could only be described as 'luxurious'. This should be called a Tudor dynasty mansion, a stone structure that almost couldn't be seen at all in the space colonies. It was 100m wide and the corridor at the front had become all grey because of the erosion . The overwhelming feeling of a fortress would make any viewer feel fear. The wide blue sky and the clouds as a backdrop made it no different from Earth.

What should be an old-styled donut-shaped space colony was shown in the sky. The axis seemed to be like Industrial 7 itself, and the afternoon lighted the mansion tiredly. Banagher hid behind the shrub and looked at the situation at the villa. However, he was stunned by Audrey, who stood up out of a sudden. Even though they were able to walk in unguarded up till now, there wasn't any guarantee that they could pass through safely.

“Are you going?” On hearing these words, Audrey stopped and turned around with a look that seemed to say “What are you doing here?”

“I can go alone. You can head back.”

At this moment, she gave a tone that seemed to emphasize the end of the line. “Bu...” Banagher's voice was filled with doubt, and Audrey turned around.

“They found out that I'm here. They're ready to invite me in.”

“Do the Vist Foundation know you?”

Her eyebrows twitched, showing that she was wavering somewhat “So you really needed to meet someone of the Foundation...” without waiting for him to finish, Audrey turned around and walked off. Banagher snorted and moved off in larger strides than Audrey.

“Banagher-san...”

"There may be a terrifying big sister out there waiting for me. It's safer for me to go ahead."

How could he turn around at this now that he came all the way here? "Also, call me Banagher." After he said that, Banagher carried Haro, who couldn't move really well on the grass, and asked: "Right?" Haro energetically answered back "Haro!" as the voice echoed in his chest.

Banagher took this as a yes and started to walk to the villa. Forget about being served. If we're going to be captured, there's no need to lead us all the way here. He was thinking that since there was no danger, he might as well come to the inside of the 'Snail' since it was a rare chance itself. The colony builder was a mothership that was meant to develop the Jupiter Celestial area. Since he was a technical student who volunteered to go to Jupiter, he was interested in this technology.

In fact, through this viewpoint, moving the green pastures of the Earth to this residential areas was meaningful. To extract the radioactive fuel Helium-3, there was regular transport to Jupiter. However, the total journey of 1.6 billion km would take several years, and it's said that it's not uncommon to see cases where the crew members collapse mentally. Even the Earth would be buried amidst the deep outer space with countless stars in them—maybe it's because the colony builder was supposed to head to a place that's too far for the human soul to work at alone that such a haven was needed. More than half the human population were in space colonies, and became space residents that didn't understand real nature. However, it need not be just a visual thing, as a 'nature'

that could be touched, stepped on and sniggered at could save the human soul.

“If we can't leave the ground, what Newtypes can we even talk about...”

She unwittingly muttered that. While Banagher answered back “Eh?”, Audrey gave a vague smile and moved her feet that stopped before. He didn't even know why he felt this way. He didn't have any interest in Zeon Deikun's Newtype theory. Was it because he just heard of the history lesson before?

After a short walk, the grassland that was as high as the knees became a flat green. They were already close enough to see the fine details of the villa. It seemed that there wasn't anyone around, and there wasn't any perimeter wall or gate surrounding the house. Maybe this entire land was private property, and that they entered the garden already.

In that case, they didn't need to think about intruding illegally. Banagher climbed up the stairs leading to the atrium and faced the two large doors. The doors were made of wood, and they were decorated with metal rings and lion heads. Banagher and Audrey nodded at each other and used the metal ring to knock on the door like how it was done in movies. They didn't know whether this could be used as a doorbell, but the sound of the metal knocking was deeper than what they imagined it to be as it seemed to ring through the entire silent area of the residential area. After seeing that the door didn't show any signs of opening, Banagher

shrugged his shoulders, and Audrey went forward to grab the door handle. The unlocked door let out a creaking sound as it opened.

The ceiling that was at the second storey had a posh-looking chandelier on it. There was a wide set of stairs linking to the second level, and once they went up, it was a corridor in mid-air that felt like a deck was being repaired. The corridor looked like those in the movies when a posh-looking woman would be dressed up nicely and smiling as she invite them in. there was complete silence inside the dim place, and there wasn't any presence of any butlers coming out to serve them. There wasn't anyone else who questioned the duo who trespassed randomly other than the stares from the paintings on the wall, and the empty domestic presence surrounded Banagher.

It wasn't the emptiness of a house full of charms or the loneliness of an abandoned house. The number of furniture and house decorations made it feel like people once lived in here. However, the cold air didn't have any tinge of warmth too—feeling that his body was trembling, Banagher shouted: “ Anybody home?” and didn't get any answer. He exchanged glances with Audrey and walked deeper into the first level.

It seemed that there was some regular maintenance as there wasn't any odour in the empty rooms or corridors. The sofas in the living room were covered with dustproof-cloth, and the glass windows with curtains drawn were wiped clean too. Unwilling to open the windows on his own, Banagher looked through the gap that showed a ray light looked around, and walked towards the balcony where he could look down into the atrium. The atrium

was a Colosseum that was surrounded on all sides by the building itself, and amidst the different sizes, there were many sculptures beside the restroom area at the middle.

Each of these were things that Banagher saw in arts textbooks, so these shouldn't be the real thing themselves, but delicately crated duplicates. The sculptures remained inside the empty garden, and there was an empty and chilly sense of presence, making one feel that they may be moving before he was here.

A bird flew by and stopped on the face of a man's status that was deep in thought before flying off again. Banagher looked at the statue and felt that the statue was looking back at him. He swallowed his saliva, took a few steps back from the balcony and recollected his thoughts, saying 'there doesn't seem to be anyone around' and went back to the corridor.

“There should be a command area somewhere. Once there...”

Speaking halfway through, he stopped as Audrey wasn't around. Haro was rolling around on the floor. He looked around and couldn't find anyone. He frantically walked to the neighboring block, and found that there was a door opened downstairs. Banagher hurriedly ran to the exit, saw Audrey standing in the dim room and heaved a sigh of relief.

The side of her face was lit by the light that shone in through the curtains of the windows as she looked up at the wall. Banagher was about to say 'don't scare me like that', but he was stunned when he entered the room.

The ceiling was abnormally high, and on the wall of this room that was the largest he ever saw, there were six really large paintings on it. They were arranged together without leaving any space, and it seemed that the paintings themselves were the wall. No, those were paintings. They look like they were woven onto a piece of cloth. A large embroidery...it's called a tapestry, correct?

The six tapestries were all of different sizes, but the smallest one was 3m wide, and the height was about 5m. They should be related works as the base colors and structures of all these works were the same. They had a woman standing at the middle of a garden with flowers and animals woven in them. The imaginary world the woman was in would remind one of a small outer space. There were two beasts on both sides, and the completely different parties created 6 scenes. Amongst the two beasts, one of them was a lion, and the other one was one with the body of a horse and a long thin horn on its head—

"Unicorn..."

Audrey muttered to herself. Banagher heard his heart pulsate for a moment.

The memory of the white mobile suit he saw this morning in the subway train awoke in him, and the blood that moved inside his body started to rumble. He didn't know the reason, and he didn't have the strength to even think about it. The woman who was taking fruits from the tray the maidservant was holding; the woman playing the harp at the table; the woman making a crown

of flowers...Banagher felt that something inside his mind was rumbling and about to break out from his skill as his eyes were enchanted by the tapestry.

The woman who let the unicorn rest on her knees and looked at the mirror; the woman holding a flag with a moon on it; and last of all, a woman standing in front of a small tent, putting her jewellery into a box a maidservant's holding. The unicorn and the lion were on both sides of the tent, and the woman who looked like she was putting her jewellery away was entering a tent. The tent had the words 'A Mon de Désir' written on it, and this was an ancient language that would only be understood by only a few researchers . The meaning was...

"...My only wish."

He subconsciously said it out, and immediately felt a chill. I couldn't possibly read it. I couldn't possibly understand it. Banagher shook off Audrey's anxious expression and asked, "Is this a famous painting?"

"I don't know...but since it was Vist Foundation who shifted this piece of art over to outer space, I think it's something valuable. "

Audrey frowned in surprise as she noted. I know, Banagher told himself this in his mind. It doesn't matter whether it was famous or not. I know this piece of art, and it's not that I saw this before on TV or textbooks. No, I never even touched it before. A

long time ago, I couldn't even get to the bottom of this tapestry. Someone carried me up and told me the meaning. At that time, that room also had the sound of a piano playing—

He slowly turned around. The piano that was beside the window as basked under the sunlight that came in. Banagher walked over to it and touched the piano that was covered in cloth.

“Seems like nobody's staying here. I'll go find the control room. You...”

“I remember.”

Muttering unknowingly, Banagher turned to look at Audrey: “I remember. I saw these before.”

“These tapestries?”

Looking at the tapestries that were hung on the wall, Audrey gave a look of disbelief back at him. Banagher was forced to move by this irritation he couldn't explain and said: “No, it's not like this. ..” At this moment, a third person's voice could be heard: “Do you like it?” causing him to gasp.

He looked around. A man was standing at the door. He looked at Audrey, who was frozen, and again looked back at Banagher. The man slowly entered the oroom. The somewhat dim light lit his silver hair and sharp eyes, and Banagher felt that the pressure in this room got even more intense. He subconsciously took two steps back, knocked into the piano, and the photo frame on the piano dropped down.

He instinctively turned back to look, and saw the face of a ten-year-old, slightly plump and giving a poker face. The boy seemed to have a man and a woman on both sides, most probably his parents. The woman, who seemed to be the mother, had her hand on the boy's shoulders as she smiled. The energetic man standing on the other side was also like the boy, showing a poker face. Looking at the man's face as he had that Chinese-styled collared shirt on, Banagher again turned around to stared at those sharp eyes in the dim place.

His cheeks were slightly skinner, and his hair had faded in color , but the man in front of him was completely identical to the man in the photo. Most likely, he's the owner of this villa. The stakeholder of Anaheim Electronics, and the one rumored to be the actual owner of the 'Snail', the leader of Vist Foundation—

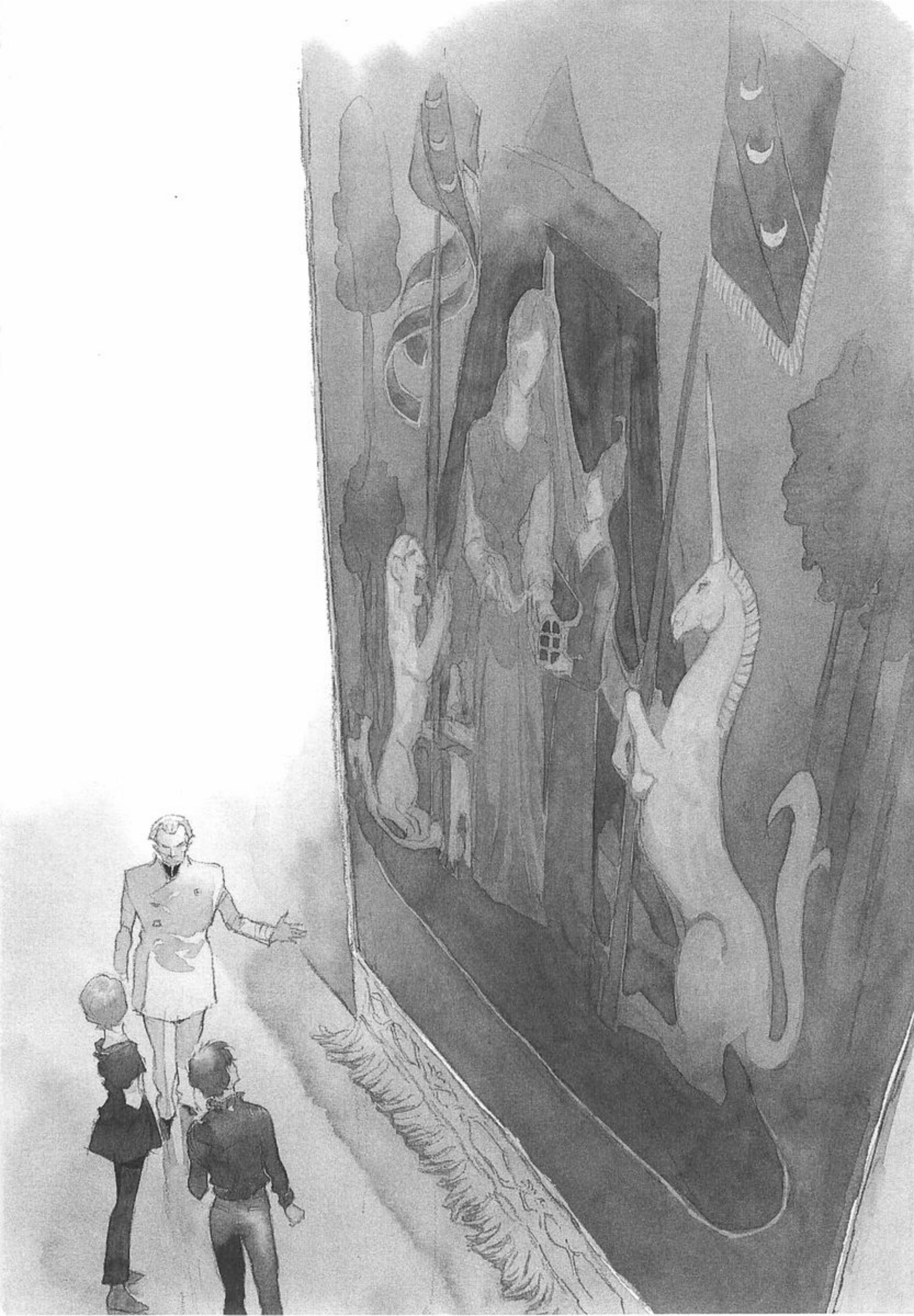
“"The Lady and the Unicorn”, author unknown. Most people thought that it was a tapestry made during the Middle Ages in France. This wasn't a copy. It's said that the ex-leader spent a lot of effort trying to get it during the One Year War.”

As he casually looked at the two intruders, the man—Cardeas Vist continued to talk. “The New Moon's Flag this woman's holding was the crest of someone who represented an advisor to the French King in the past, Vist Foundation, my family. Most likely, an ancestor requested someone to make it, and it ended up in his hands.”

The voice sounded steady, but had impeccable strength in it. Banagher put the photo frame that fell down back to its position and looked at the faces of the people in the family.

There was Cardeas, who was about 20 years younger than before, a woman who seemed to be his wife, and the boy. These were all faces he could no recognize, faces of strangers. After seeing that, the sense of 'recognition' became ambiguous, and the tapestry and the piano suddenly became unknown foreign things.

“Right now, the common idea was that this series of tapestries represented the 5 senses of humanity. The woman holding the fruit represented taste; the woman holding the harp represented hearing; the woman creating the crown of flowers represented smell; the woman holding the mirror represented sigh; and the woman touching the horn of the unicorn represented touch...” Explaining in order, Cardeas looked at the last picture, and his eyes narrowed. “And the last one was called the 'tent'. As for what this meant, there wasn't any decisive conclusion to this. The woman takes off the bracelet she was wearing and puts it into the box in the maidservant's hands. There was a tent behind it with the words 'My one desire' on it. The unicorn and the lion are leading her in. What does that tent mean? What does the 'box' represent?”



Audrey's eyes widened, and Banagher could feel her tension. Cardeas turned to look at her.

"Some said that the tent had her husband in it, and some said that the tent led to a mental world where one gives up everything. Right now, the commonly accepted explanation would be the latter. While giving up the bracelet, the lady wanted to give up the delight her five senses brought, and the desire that they bring before releasing herself to a zone only the sixth sense could feel... the free will ancient scholars talked about was 'release'. In other words, the 'my own desire' was a realm of realization, and the tent was a symbolization of it. The bracelet represented personal desire, and the 'box' was a symbol of an earthly seal. Of it could also be interpreted that as the 'box' was opened, the lady was able to give up on her personal desire and face the next world."

"This unicorn's existence is also symbolic. This is a legendary beast that had many meanings to it, but our family interpret it as the beast of possibilities. It was a beast that was born out of everyone's belief and love. Humans use this possibility of existence to raise this beast, causing a situation where it didn't matter whether it existed or not...like what Riike's poem said. On one hand, it could be interpreted as the sign of the Virgin, but we shall use it as a more ordinary term. We symbolize it as the power of belief...the symbol of hope."

Once Cardeas finished, Banagher saw that there was a crest sewn on his chest pocket, one that looked like a unicorn. Just when

he was about to ask whether it was the crest of the Vist Foundation or something, Cardeas looked at Audrey and said: “Pardon me for my late introductions.”

“I'm the owner of this house. My name is Cardeas Vist.”

Though Audrey looked rather mild at the moment, her expression wasn't showing any smile at all. She inadvertently looked away and started to stammer. “I...” But she clenched her fists tight and again faced Cardeas' tall body.

“Sorry to intrude on you. I'm...”

Cardeas raised his hand gently to prevent her from continuing. “I know you. Please don't declare your name first.”

“But...”

“You don't want to get this boy involved, right?”

Saying till here, Cardeas looked over at Banagher, but as their eyes met, his eyes looked back at Audrey.

“If there's anything important, please hold on for a while. However, if you're the sort of person I think you are, I hope that you understand that we're meeting under dangerous circumstances. Your presence here would make your comrades feel betrayed.”

“Zinnerman's a cautious man, so he won't create any unnecessary trouble...”

"Unnecessary? Is the need to ensure your safety unnecessary?"

The fists that were tightly clenched trembled slightly as Audrey went silent. Unable to understand what they were saying, Banagher could only stare at them in a flabbergasted manner, and his eyes met Cardeas, who suddenly looked over at him.

"You risked yourself too much. She'll be under our protection. Head back then."

No matter whether it was some bigshot in the monetary world or not, one shouldn't be giving such a condescending look at someone they just met for the first time. Banager stepped forward, but got taken aback by Cardeas' sharp expression as he continued to remain there. Cardeas' entire body gave a heavy presence as he closed the distance between himself and Banagher.

Cardeas' eyes scanned Banagher from head to toe and stopped at the Haro at his feet. "Such an old toy." There was a mysterious crying-like tone in the voice. On hearing these unexpected words, Banagher looked straight at Cardeas' cold expression.

"Do you know why she's being pursued, and what kind of people were pursuing her?"

"Well...I don't know, but they're really scary people."

"Scary?"

"I just had this feeling."

Gripping his trembling fingers hard, Banagher answered without wavering, and Cardeas' eyes suddenly became kiner: " Saying such things that a Newtype would say..." The somewhat wry voice entered Banagher's ears. Of course, one didn't need to look at the expression to see that he was laughing at Banagher for arrogantly saying that in a childish manner."

"I was born in a place where such people kept going in and out, so I could tell."

That was the last straw. Banagher was already expecting to be laughed at, but the wryness in Cardeas' eyes vanished. "...I see. So you say that you can recognize people?" Banagher could tell that this voice again sounded like crying.

"Then, let's not waste what you know. Head back. If you continue to stay here, your future will be wrecked. This is not what the person who sent you to Anaheim Electronics wanted."

The unexpected words caused him to be shocked. Was his cover blown? No, Banagher suddenly thought. This Cardeas may be a friend of his father who he never met and requested him to transfer into the College.

From the few words his mother spoke and the history up till now, he knew that his father should be someone of status. Though it was a vague memory, the feel of the room and the tapestries didn't seem to be just a false impression...so strong that if he never saw the family photo, he would have thought that this was his family.

“You...knew?”

Immediately afterwards, Banagher forgot about all of these and started asking. Cardeas moved his eyes away slightly.

“I'm the chairman after all, and I can check any student's particulars and expel them accordingly.”

The last words went through Banagher with a straight gaze. Since he was being watched the moment he and Audrey, who was being 'hosted', entered the 'Snail', it's easy to investigate their history. The cold reality of understanding this caused Banagher to lower his head dejectedly. The passion shown just now cooled off as he felt his knees lose strength.

“I'll give recognition to a young man's impulse. It's alright to believe in instincts. However, if your knowledge and ability isn't enough, your response would be the wrong one. Go back. Don't get involved in this.”

After this one-sided aggression, Cardeas left Banagher. Banagher couldn't say anything, didn't even have the strength to stare at his back, and lowered his head. He succumbed again. This time, he succumbed under the violence called authority, and was about to collapse again. But even though he had this feeling, his wilted nerves didn't feel like getting back up in a motivated manner. Banagher turned to look at Audrey.

Audrey looked back at him too. After their eyes met, she immediately looked away, which made Banagher feel despair as he already knew what Audrey was about to say next.

"That's enough, Banagher. Go back."

Her eyes were looking at him again, and the words were what he imagined it to be as they pierced through his heart. "But...!" Banagher's tone was full of panic.

"It's enough that you brought me here. I'll handle the rest."

After giving a stiff smile, Audrey looked over at Cardeas. On seeing those eyes that were filled with intense will, Cardeas wordlessly walked away. Banagher felt that Audrey was about to follow Cardeas, and before he could think, his feet stepped on the floor first.

Though his posture was tilting somewhat because of the lower gravity, Banagher blocked Audrey as she was about to walk to the door. "Audrey." Banagher called her name, and her jade-green eyes were looking back at him.

"Before I met you this morning, I saw a white mobile suit in the subway train."

After blinking a bit, Audrey lifted her head slightly. Banagher ignored Cardeas, who was eavesdropping on them, and continued to look at her face.

"After that, I wanted to go to work, but there was no work for the day. I went to the cafeteria with Takuya, and saw you floating near the sun. I don't know much after that, but I was really excited. It's like another world appeared right in front of me, or that something I couldn't see in the past appeared right in front of me...

this was the first time I felt that. It's like I felt my comfort zone for the first time."

Banagher himself knew how foolish these words were, but his mouth just couldn't stop. On hearing that Audrey was looking a little moody and becoming more so, Baangher himself continued.

"I don't care who you are. Just say that you need me, say that it's better for me to be here. Then I..."

"No."

Audrey answered before he could finish. Shocked by the stiff expression and the impact of the voice, Banagher felt his body waver.

"The world you saw today was nothing. It's just a dark and cold world. You shouldn't be here."

"Audrey..."

"Forget about it. Don't get involved with me. It's better for you."

This time, it was really a tone to clear the divide. Audrey turned around, and Banagher was rooted there. All around the delicate yet obstinate profile, the dark red base of the tapestries appeared in the dim place.

Perhaps seeing that the little drama between both of them was over, Cardeas nodded his head slightly, and men in suits appeared at the door of the room, ushering Audrey in with a courteous

demeanor. Audrey lifted her head and followed them out. Banagher instinctively tried to catch up, but he was stopped by the presence that suddenly appeared behind him. Unknowingly, two men appeared from a room and were standing behind Banagher.

"We'll send you back to you hostel."

One of the men. The man who would remind one of the ferocity and viciousness of a hunter had the crest of a unicorn on the chest. Knowing that he would be suppressed if he tried to resist, Banagher looked at Cardeas, who turned around and said just when he was about to lead Audrey out of the room: "This would be better."

"The people chasing her may view you as a target."

It was logical. Though Banagher himself felt that this was just an excuse, he couldn't say anything. Banagher clenched his fists and lowered his head. The embarrassment and regret left a stinging feeling in his nose, and the unicorn on the tapestries became blurred.

Audrey went through the door of the room without turning back, and Cardeas followed her from behind. As he left, he looked back, and seemed to stop for a moment as he probably looked at Banagher. However, once Banagher lifted his head, the profile vanished, and the light that came in through the door remained in the room, causing Banagher to see remains of the world he lost.